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In The

Supreme Court of the United States

PETER DECENA, WILLIAM NEWMAN, WILLIAM MANION, MICHAEL KNOX, ROBERT CARNEY, PAUL MESSIER, AND RAFAEL NIEVES,

Petitioners,

vs.

THE SAN JOSÉ CHARTER OF THE HELLS ANGELS MOTORCYCLE CLUB, et al.,

Respondents.

On Petition For Writ Of Certiorari To The United States Court Of Appeals For The Ninth Circuit

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

1. Does the shooting of a vicious guard dog by a police officer, while serving a high risk search warrant for evidence of a murder, result in a violation of the Fourth Amendment when there is no evidence of any viable alternative?

2. Was the law clearly established such that police officers should have known that, in serving a high risk search warrant for evidence of a murder, the Fourth Amendment is violated by shooting a vicious guard dog that stands between the officers and the residence to be searched?

3. Did the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals correctly apply the qualified immunity standard?

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING

Petitioners Peter Decena, William Newman, William Manion, Michael Knox, Robert Carney, Paul Messier, and Rafael Nieves are San José Police Officers and were defendants/appellants in the Ninth Circuit.

Respondents The San José Charter Of The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, an unincorporated association, James Arnett, Marnie Arnett, Robert Brancato, Leslie Brancato, Ronald Cook, Vickie Bozzi, Fillmore Cross, Margaret Cross, Ted Demello, Deborah Van Tassel, James Elrite, Molly Elrite, Larry Gorham, Jeffrey Pettigrew, Christine Pettigrew, James Souza, Robert Vieira, Lori Vieira, James Welch, Gregory Wilkins, and Denise Wilkins were plaintiffs/appellees in the Ninth Circuit.

Petitioner Robert Linderman is a Santa Clara County Sheriff's Lieutenant and was a defendant/appellant in the Ninth Circuit.[1]

[1] Lieutenant Robert Linderman of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office is filing a separate petition to this Court based on a different issue that was addressed in the same Ninth Circuit opinion.

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CITATIONS OF REPORTS OF OPINIONS ENTERED IN THE CASE

San José Charter of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club v. City of San José, 402 F.3d 962 (9th Cir. 2005). App. 1. The opinion of the District Court is not reported. App. 40.

BASIS FOR SUPREME COURT JURISDICTION

The Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit entered its judgment on April 4, 2005. App. 1. Petitioners seek review of that judgment on a writ of certiorari.

This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1) to review on a writ of certiorari the judgment of a federal court of appeals. *See also Mitchell v. Forsythe*, 472 U.S. 511, 530 (1985).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED IN THE CASE

This action involves the Constitution of the United States, Amendment IV, which provides:

> The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On August 24, 1997, a man named Kevin Sullivan died following a severe beating at the Pink Poodle strip club, located in San José, California. Because the killing took place in an unincorporated pocket of Santa Clara County, the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office was notified and immediately began to investigate.

Sheriff's Sergeant Linderman led the investigation. He ultimately determined that Steve Tausan, a bouncer at the club and a member of the San José Charter of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, had kicked and beaten Sullivan to death. A witness later came forward and told Sgt. Linderman that there was a videotape of the incident made over the Pink Poodle security system. The witness stated that he believed that a copy of the tape had been given to the Hells Angels.

The Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office charged Steve Tausan with the murder of Kevin Sullivan. In connection with the prosecution, the Sheriff's Office sought and obtained a warrant authorizing a search of the Hells Angels' Clubhouse and the residences of nine members or associates of the Hells Angels for the videotape of the incident, for notes of Hells Angels' meetings, and for "indicia" of gang affiliation.[2]

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[2] The District Attorney's Office had filed a gang sentencing enhancement charge against Tausan under California Penal Code Section 186.22, alleging that the murder had been committed in furtherance of the criminal conduct of the Hells Angels gang. The search for "indicia" was intended to obtain evidence supporting this charge.

Because of the desire to serve the warrants simultaneously, in order to avoid warnings between subjects of the searches, the Sheriff's Office arranged for assistance from multiple law enforcement agencies, including the San José Police Department. San José agreed to assist in the action, and assigned four teams of officers from specialized units that routinely served high-risk search warrants. Leaders of those teams were given approximately one-week advance notice of the action to prepare for the entries.

The San José police officers assigned to the entry teams had little or no information about the murder itself, the criminal investigation, or the process that led to the issuance of the warrants. In general, the officers were aware that a judge had authorized the searches, that the warrant sought evidence related to a murder investigation, including a videotape of the incident itself, and that the residents of the houses included members of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. The searches were considered high risk by the Sheriff's Office.

Based on the information supplied by the Sheriff's Office and independent surveillance, the San José officers determined that the residences of Plaintiffs Bob Vieira and James Souza were both guarded by large, aggressive dogs. Officers had observed a sign posted on the side gate of Souza's residence, stating "Warning Property Protected By Guard Dog". The entry team was also informed that a person familiar with the residence stated that there was a large Rottweiler that would bite without provocation. The Vieira property included a residence and a junkyard completely encircled by a tall, padlocked, cyclone fence. Officers were informed that the property was guarded by three large dogs. Both Vieira and Souza had prior weapons-related

convictions and Souza had a record of having been arrested on narcotics charges.

On the morning of January 21, 1998, at about 7:00 a.m., teams of law enforcement officers, including the teams of San José officers, simultaneously served the search warrants at residences of members of the Hells Angels in various parts of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. The role of Defendant San José police officers was limited to effecting entry and securing the premises. Once secured, the residences were to be turned over to the Sheriff's Department to conduct the actual searches.

At the Souza residence, after the entry team cleared the interior of the house, two officers were dispatched into the back yard to look for the guard dog, which they knew was still on the loose. The property to be searched included the back yard and a residential out-building, both of which needed to be secured for the searching officers. As an officer walked along the narrow path at the side of the house, a 100-pound Rottweiler came around the corner, growled and began moving toward the officer. Believing the dog would attack, and feeling that he had no alternative, the officer discharged his weapon in two short bursts, killing the animal. A second dog present at the Sousa house posed no threat to the officers. That dog was not harmed.

At the Vieira residence, the officers were confronted by a locked cyclone fence that surrounded the property. Between the fence and the house, a number of dogs roamed freely. When the entry team arrived at the Vieira gate, three large dogs resembling bull-mastiffs immediately emerged and ran toward the gate barking and growling. One of the dogs kept jumping up and biting at

the fingers of officers who were trying to cut through the fence. The other two dogs stood about three or four feet behind the first dog, also growling and barking. One officer tried to push the attacking dog back with the barrel of his shotgun, hitting it in the chest and yelling to scare it, but the dog would not retreat and appeared aggressive and agitated.

The gate was cut, and the officers were ready to enter the yard. However, the dogs had not retreated. The officers believed they needed to make entry quickly in order to preserve some element of surprise and prevent the possible destruction of evidence. The officer assigned to protect the team discharged his shotgun at the dog that had been biting at the officers' hands. That dog went down, but the second dog stood its ground, growling, barking and baring its teeth. The officer shot at the animal once, but it did not move, so the officer fired another round, injuring the animal. The second and third dogs retreated. As the officers moved toward the house, the first dog started to get back up, so the officer shot and killed the dog to insure that it would not attack them. The second dog was ultimately taken from the scene by an Animal Control officer and later died.

Plaintiffs filed this action on January 11, 1999. After a series of motions dealing with the validity of the warrant, a number of defendants sought summary judgment regarding the manner in which the warrant was served, including the incidents with the dogs at the Souza and Vieira residences.

On May 31, 2002, the District Court denied the motions of the officers involved in the two entries that resulted in the shooting of the dogs. App. 40. The court

found that the shooting of the dogs violated plaintiffs' Fourth Amendment rights and that the officers were not entitled to qualified immunity.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the District Court's ruling in a published opinion dated April 4, 2005. App. 1.

ARGUMENT

A. The Fourth Amendment Does Not Prohibit Shooting a Vicious Guard Dog While Serving a High Risk Search Warrant for Evidence of a Murder.

Case law throughout the country is notable for the complete absence of precedent relating to the shooting of dogs by police officers in the course of serving warrants. While police departments everywhere are sure to encounter vicious dogs on a regular basis while searching for persons and evidence, no decision of any Circuit, District or even State court has provided constitutional guidance concerning the reasonableness of police actions during the service of a warrant which result in the death or injury of a dog. For this reason itself, the Court is urged to grant this Petition to resolve an important matter of first impression.

Ninth Circuit case law has established that the shooting of a dog by a police officer is considered a seizure for Fourth Amendment purposes, and is thus subject to a

"reasonableness" analysis.[3] In *Fuller v. Vines*, 36 F.3d 65 (9th Cir. 1994), *overruled on other grounds, Robinson v. Solano County*, 278 F.3d 1007, 1013 (9th Cir. 2002) a police officer shot and killed plaintiff's pet dog in plaintiff's front yard while conducting an investigation into an unrelated matter. According to plaintiff's version of events, while the officers and the plaintiff were talking, the dog merely stood up, presenting no threat to the officers, who shot the dog twice. The Court found that a dog is an "effect" or "property" subject to a Fourth Amendment seizure analysis. Plaintiff's allegations were sufficient to allege a violation of the Fourth Amendment with respect to the "unreasonable" seizure of the animal. *Id.* at 68. However, *Fuller* did not discuss what circumstances might otherwise be reasonable or unreasonable for the shooting of a dog. *Fuller* simply explains that the shooting of a dog, for no legitimate reason, violates the Fourth Amendment. *See also Lesher v. Reed*, 12 F.3d 148 (8th Cir. 1994) (city's removal of police dog from officer's residence, without consent, subject to Fourth Amendment scrutiny); *Ellis v. City of Chicago*, 667 F.2d 606 (7th Cir. 1981) (interest in officer safety sufficient governmental interest to justify shooting of dog that lunged at officer); *Brown v. Muhlenberg Township*, 269 F.3d 205 (3rd Cir. 2001) (unreasonable to shoot pet dog, which had wandered out of owner's yard, and presented no threat to officer – dissent concluding that there is no Fourth Amendment

[3] Some older cases seem not to even afford constitutional protection to the unreasonable shooting of a dog. *See, e.g., Pfeil v. Rogers*, 757 F.2d 850, 866 (7th Cir. 1985) (particularly offensive conduct of officer in shooting dogs, one while in its doghouse, "does not support an action under § 1983 because it did not violate a right guaranteed under the United States Constitution.").

precedent in any jurisdiction prohibiting shooting of unleashed, uncontrolled, barking Rottweiler); *Altman v. City of High Point*, 330 F.3d 194 (4th Cir. 2003) (reasonable for animal control officer to shoot and kill dogs roaming at large in neighborhood, even in absence of direct threat).

These cases do not address the circumstance of encountering a threatening animal while attempting to serve a search warrant. Nor do they evaluate the amount or weight of governmental interest in any particular situation. Indeed, they merely demonstrate that **some level** of governmental interest is required in order for a police officer to shoot a dog. The cases provide no further instruction on what a court would consider *reasonable* or *unreasonable* with regard to such shooting.

As in any other constitutional challenge to a seizure, "[d]etermining whether the force used to effect a particular seizure is 'reasonable' under the Fourth Amendment requires a careful balancing of 'the nature and quality of the intrusion on the individual's Fourth Amendment interests' against the countervailing governmental interests at stake." *Graham v. Conner*, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989), quoting *Tennessee v. Garner*, *supra*, 471 U.S. 1, 8 (1985). In the instant case, the Ninth Circuit purported to evaluate the governmental interests involved but gave little or no weight to the numerous law enforcement interests implicated in safely and effectively searching for evidence of a murder.[4]

[4] Indeed, the Ninth Circuit minimized the importance of searching for a videotape of the actual incident by noting that the District Court had determined that the warrant lacked probable cause to search for

(Continued on following page)

In particular, the Court of Appeals relied primarily on the fact that despite a week to prepare for the entry, the officers had made no realistic plan to "incapacitate" the dogs. In view of the lack of any evidence whatsoever that such a plan was possible or feasible, the Court's analysis is seriously flawed. The decision seems to impose a constitutional duty to immobilize vicious animals that are known to exist on a property before a search can be conducted. The decision even seems to hold that failure to plan for such immobilization itself constitutes a Fourth Amendment violation. The imposition of such a burdensome responsibility upon law enforcement should not be undertaken in the absence of evidence regarding the existence, effectiveness, or feasibility of methods of quickly and safely incapacitating an animal.

Plaintiffs provided *no evidence or facts of any kind* establishing the existence of feasible alternative methods of subduing vicious guard dogs. No evidence was presented that chemical agents or tranquilizers[5] are effective to incapacitate dogs. No evidence was presented concerning how long such method, if it existed, would take, how long

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one videotape in numerous locations. (App. 26.) Although the District Court did find, years after the fact, that probable cause was lacking, the officers performing the entry relied on a signed warrant, valid on its face, authorizing a search for direct evidence of a murder. The Ninth Circuit's minimization of this interest exemplifies that Court's lack of sensitivity toward legitimate law enforcement interests.

[5] The Ninth Circuit's opinion does not actually propose any reasonable alternatives. At the District Court level, and on appeal, Plaintiffs simply argued, without supporting evidence, that tranquilizer darts should have been employed. The only actual *evidence* on the issue was presented by two San José officers, who testified that they knew of no effective methods of tranquilizing or otherwise subduing aggressive dogs under the circumstances presented.

it would last, or what risks it would involve. No evidence was presented as to whether **any** police department **anywhere** had ever used a tranquilizing device on a dog, or any other hypothetical less destructive method, in association with serving a warrant. Thus, there was no evidence available to even evaluate the feasibility of the supposed alternative.

Nor did Plaintiffs offer any expert testimony or evidence of any law enforcement treatises, guidelines, policies, or recommendations from any source whatsoever that endorse the use of tranquilizers on dogs as a law enforcement technique. The Ninth Circuit simply stated that less destructive measures should have been taken without any evidence of the viability or effectiveness of any such measures. This analysis departs markedly from other Circuit Court cases where the availability of alternatives has been considered. *See Gutierrez v. City of San Antonio*, 139 F.3d 441, 450 (5th Cir. 1998) (other restraining devices were available and effective); *Headwaters Forest Defense v. County of Humbolt*, 276 F.3d 1125 (9th Cir. 2002) (use of pepper spray not justified because it was established that protesters could have been removed in other manner); *Smith v. Hemet*, 394 F.3d 689 (9th Cir. 2005) (expert testimony established that control holds would have been effective to subdue suspect who had been bitten by police dog). In these other cases, *proof* of feasible alternatives was provided. In this case, such proof was completely absent.

In determining the *reasonableness* of the officers' conduct, it is unfair and improper to consider hypothetical alternatives. Plainly, if officers were trained to tranquilize dogs and that method of control was an established technique available to law enforcement, a reasonable officer

could be expected to at least consider whether to use tranquilization when dogs are known to be present. However, in the absence of at least some proof that tranquilization is an accepted and effective law enforcement tool, a court should not declare officers unreasonable for failing to take advantage of it. Indeed, case law has established that the Constitution does not require the use of every conceivable law enforcement tool that may be useful. *Plakas v. Drinski*, 19 F.3d 1143, 1150 (7th Cir. 1994). The Ninth Circuit's ruling in this case imposes a new constitutional duty in the absence of any reasoned analysis, based upon hypothetical circumstances. The ruling that a constitutional violation occurred should be reviewed and reversed.

B. Qualified Immunity Protects Officers Unless Particularized, Clearly Established Law Prohibits Their Conduct.

Qualified immunity shields government officials performing discretionary functions from liability for civil damages if "their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 818 (1982). In a qualified immunity analysis, the ultimate question is whether the state of the law at the time of the action gives an officer **fair or reasonable warning** that his or her conduct is unconstitutional. *Hope v. Pelzer*, 536 U.S. 730, 122 S.Ct. 2500 (2002). In order for a right to be clearly established, "its contours must be sufficiently clear that a reasonable official would understand that what he is doing violates that right." *Id.*, 122 S.Ct. at 2515.

In determining whether the law is clearly established, Courts must examine the pre-existing law in a particularized, rather than general, sense. In *Brosseau v. Haugen*, 125 S.Ct. 596 (2004) an officer shot a man attempting to escape in a vehicle. The Ninth Circuit found that, under the circumstances, the officer did not act in response to a threat of serious injury, and therefore violated the Fourth Amendment under *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985). The Ninth Circuit also felt that this rule of law was clearly established and therefore refused to grant qualified immunity to the officer. The Supreme Court reversed, finding a "clear misapprehension of the qualified immunity standard." *Brosseau v. Haugen*, 125 S.Ct. at 596, n.3.

This Court noted that *Graham v. Conner*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989) had clearly established the general proposition that the use of force must be objectively reasonable, but that such proposition is not sufficient to determine whether the law is clear in particular circumstances. The right "must have been 'clearly established' in a more particularized, and hence more relevant sense." *Brosseau v. Haugen*, 125 S.Ct. at 599, quoting *Saucier v. Katz*, 533 U.S. 194 (2001).

The Ninth Circuit, in *Brosseau*, had analyzed the potential violation created by an officer shooting a fleeing suspect in a vehicle under *Graham* and *Garner*, determining that the law regarding excessive force was clearly established. In reversing the Ninth Circuit's decision, this Court required a more specific evaluation of case law relevant to the particularized situation that Brosseau confronted: "whether to shoot a disturbed felon, set on avoiding capture through vehicular flight, when persons in the immediate area are at risk from that flight." *Id.* at 600. The Court examined a number of appellate cases involving

suspects fleeing in vehicles. The Court stated that "these cases, taken together undoubtedly show that this area is one in which the result depends very much on the facts of each case. None of them squarely governs the case here; they do suggest that Brosseau's actions fell in the 'hazy border between excessive and acceptable force.'" *Id.* at 600.

C. The Court of Appeals Decision Fails to Follow Supreme Court Precedent Because It Relies Only on General Principles.

In the instant case, the Ninth Circuit applied extremely general principles in determining that established law prohibited the conduct of San José police officers when they shot guard dogs at the two locations. In so doing, the Ninth Circuit has decided the important federal question of how to determine qualified immunity in a way that conflicts with this Court's decision in *Brosseau* and the cases cited therein.

The Ninth Circuit relied on the following general principles in concluding that the law on this issue was "clearly established."

1. The Fourth Amendment prohibits the shooting of a dog for an insufficient governmental reason.

As discussed above, the reported cases involving the shooting of dogs deal only generally with an officer's constitutional responsibilities. Prior to January 21, 1998, when the subject actions of the officers took place, established

law in this regard simply prohibited the shooting of a dog in the absence of a sufficient governmental interest.[6] Not a single case discussed the *Graham* balancing of interests in the context of a police action that is threatened by the presence of a guard dog. No cases discussed or evaluated the strength of the governmental interests involved in searching for evidence of crime necessary to justify the shooting of a dog, or indeed, the strength of a person's interest in a guard dog.

These prior cases stand for the proposition that an officer may not *unreasonably* kill a person's dog. However, declaring that an officer must act *reasonably* in the manner in which he or she deals with a guard dog does not put an officer on notice that any particular conduct is or is not reasonable. In *Brosseau* and *Saucier*, this Court admonished the Ninth Circuit that *Graham v. Conner's* "objectively reasonableness" standard is not sufficient to determine whether the law is clear in particular circumstances. The Ninth Circuit's decision – that case law clearly prohibits the instant police conduct by declaring that officers may not *unreasonably* kill a dog – commits the exact same error.

Unless a court has performed at least *some* analysis of those competing interests in an analogous context, an officer cannot be expected to be on notice of the *contours* of his or her obligations. As stated previously, the case law does not even begin to announce the dimensions of an

[6] In concluding that the law was "clearly established," the Ninth Circuit erroneously cited *Brown v. Muhlenberg Twp.*, 269 F.3d 205 (3rd Cir. 2001). (App. 28-29.) That case was decided well after the subject incident. Only *Fuller v. Vines, supra,* and *Lesher v. Reed, supra*, predate the events at issue here.

officer's constitutional obligations when encountering a guard dog while serving a search warrant. *Fuller v. Vines* does not provide the necessary notice to defendant officers, under the circumstances of this case, to deprive them of qualified immunity.

2. The Fourth Amendment prohibits unnecessary destruction of property.

As the Ninth Circuit pointed out, the destruction of "property" may implicate Fourth Amendment rights. It is not necessarily a constitutional violation, however, to destroy property in the process of serving a search warrant. In *Liston v. County of Riverside*, 120 F.3d 965 (9th Cir. 1997) officers sought, pursuant to a search warrant, evidence of a methamphetamine manufacturing network. Although the warrant correctly identified the house of a prime suspect, the house had been sold to plaintiffs shortly before the service of the warrant. Plaintiffs alleged that even after determining the mistake, the officers continued to "trash" and "ransack" their home, dumping out garbage and removing items from drawers and closets. Plaintiffs also alleged the destruction of the front door and of fences surrounding the property. The Court stated that

> as an initial matter, it is not clear that these actions rise to the level of a constitutional violation, as officers executing a search warrant occasionally 'must damage property in order to perform their duty.' *Dalia v. United States*, 441 U.S. 238, 258 (1979). Although this court has not addressed the matter, other circuits have held that only unnecessarily destructive behavior, beyond that necessary to execute a warrant effectively, violates the Fourth Amendment. *See Tarpley v. Greene*, 684 F.2d 1, 9 (D.C. Cir. 1982).

The Court reversed a grant of summary judgment in favor of the officers, determining that there were disputed facts about when the damage occurred in relation to the time the officers realized that the house was occupied by new owners. "Until the officers learned that they were in the wrong house, the officers could have reasonably believed, under these precedents, that the way they conducted the search was lawful." *Liston*, 120 F.3d at 979. Thus, the Court realized that, despite the plaintiffs' allegations of trashing, ransacking and destroying a good deal of property, the officers would not have been liable, under the Fourth Amendment, if their conduct occurred while they still believed that they were in the right house. *See also*, *Bergquist v. County of Cochise*, 806 F.2d 1364, 1369 (9th Cir. 1986) (destruction of property not reasonably necessary to effectively execute warrant may violate Fourth Amendment). Thus, it is clear, as the *Liston* court explained and as the Court of Appeal in the instant case noted, *destructive behavior beyond that necessary to execute a warrant effectively, violates the Fourth Amendment*. Similarly, as established in the context of a detention, a seizure becomes unlawful when it is "more intrusive than necessary." *Florida v. Royer*, 460 U.S. 491, 504 (1983).

Again, however, these general principles of reasonableness, as applied to destruction of property, provide little or no guidance to an officer encountering a guard dog when attempting to serve a search warrant. No officer could possibly be aware, based on the concept that property should not be destroyed "unnecessarily," what circumstances would justify, or not justify, the shooting of a guard dog.

3. Reasonable alternatives may be considered.

In concluding that the law was clearly established, the Ninth Circuit also relied on the concept that the existence of less intrusive alternatives may be considered in determining whether a seizure is reasonable. In this regard, the Court cited *Chew v. Gates*, 27 F.3d 1432, 1440 n.5 (9th Cir. 1994) and *Gutierrez v. City of San Antonio*, 139 F.3d 441, 450 (5th Cir. 1998). *Chew* involved the use of a police dog to capture a suspect. In evaluating the reasonableness of that method of capture, the Court noted that in some cases, availability of alternative methods may be a factor to consider. In *Gutierrez*, a suspect died after an officer "hog-tied" him in the back of a police vehicle. In analyzing the reasonableness of that use of force, the Court considered the fact that inexpensive alternatives to hog-tying were available.

Based on this general principle, the Ninth Circuit concluded that the law was clearly established such that the San José officers should have known that shooting guard dogs, without considering a method for subduing the dogs besides killing them, would violate the Fourth Amendment. Once again, the general concept that alternatives should be considered in determining reasonableness is far too remote from the circumstances of this case to provide meaningful guidance to police officers. No prior cases discussed or even hinted at the application of this principle to the situation that the officers encountered. No reasonable officer could possibly have known, based on the general principle discussed, that the Fourth Amendment requires an officer to consider whether other means are available to subdue a dog that threatens the service of a search warrant. As demonstrated time and again by this Court's pronouncements, fair warning to officers about the

state of the law is communicated "in light of the specific context of the case, not as a broad general proposition." *Saucier v. Katz*, 533 U.S. at 201.

Furthermore, as discussed above, Plaintiffs provided no evidence or facts of any kind establishing the existence of feasible alternative methods of subduing dogs. From a police officer's perspective, it is difficult to understand how clearly established law can require the consideration and use of alternatives when no evidence exists that such alternatives even exist or are feasible.

D. The Approach of the Court of Appeals Conflicts With *Brosseau* and Other Ninth Circuit Precedent.

Based on these general Fourth Amendment principles – a dog should not be shot in the absence of a sufficient governmental interest; property should not be destroyed unnecessarily; and less destructive alternatives should be considered – the Ninth Circuit determined that the law was clearly established with respect to the shooting of a guard dog while serving a search warrant. The Court of Appeals' conclusion conflicts directly with this Court's holding in *Brosseau*, which requires a far more particularized determination. Officers are entitled to "fair notice" of unlawful conduct, as established by prior law, in order to be subject to liability. The cases relied on by the Ninth Circuit by no means "clearly establish" that the officers' conduct was proscribed by the Fourth Amendment. As in *Brosseau*, the determination of reasonableness depends upon the specific and unique circumstances involved in the case. No prior case law provided the requisite degree of guidance, as applied to specific circumstances, required in order to deprive the officers of qualified immunity. Under

this Court's precedent, the Ninth Circuit opinion again represents a clear misapprehension of the qualified immunity standard.

Additionally, the Ninth Circuit's opinion conflicts with other decisions in the same Circuit, which correctly apply the qualified immunity standard. In cases such as *Graves v. Coeur d'Alene*, 339 F.3d 829 (9th Cir. 2003), *Sorrels v. McKee*, 290 F.3d 965 (9th Cir. 2002) and *Robinson v. Solano County*, 278 F.3d 1007 (9th Cir. 2002), different panels of the Ninth Circuit recognized that general legal principles were insufficient to provide notice to officials in specific circumstances that their conduct violated the Constitution. In order to provide consistent authority with respect to this important issue, the Court should again review the Ninth Circuit's approach to qualified immunity.

This Court should accept review and reverse the decision below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attorneys for Petitioners Decena, Newman, Manion, Knox, Carney, Messier, and Nieves

FOR PUBLICATION

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

THE SAN JOSE CHARTER OF THE HELLS ANGELS MOTORCYCLE CLUB, an unincorporated association; JAMES ARNETT; MARNIE ARNETT; ROBERT BRANCATO; LESLIE BRANCATO; RONALD COOK; VICKI BOZZI; FILLMORE CROSS; MARGARET CROSS; TED DEMELLO; DEBORAH VAN TASSEL; JAMES ELRITE; MOLLY ELRITE; LARRY GORHAM; JEFFREY PETTIGREW; JAMES SOUZA; ROBERT VIEIRA; LORI VIEIRA; JAMES WELCH; GREGORY WILKINS; DENISE WILKINS,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

CITY OF SAN JOSE, a municipal corporation,

Defendant,

and

DECENA, Sgt.; CARNEY, Sgt.; MESSIER, Officer; NIEVES, Officer; MICHAEL FERNANDEZ, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer; WILLIAM MANION, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer; D. NEWMAN, Police Officer; San Jose Police Officer; KNOX, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer,

Defendants-Appellants.

No. 02-16329

D.C. No.
CV-99-20022-JF

THE SAN JOSE CHARTER OF THE HELLS ANGELS MOTORCYCLE CLUB, an unincorporated association; JAMES ARNETT; MARNIE ARNETT; ROBERT BRANCATO; LESLIE BRANCATO; RONALD COOK; VICKI BOZZI; FILLMORE CROSS; MARGARET CROSS; TED DEMELLO; DEBORAH VAN TASSEL; JAMES ELRITE; MOLLY ELRITE; LARRY GORHAM; JEFFREY PETTIGREW; JAMES SOUZA; ROBERT VIEIRA; LORI VIEIRA; JAMES WELCH; GREGORY WILKINS; DENISE WILKINS,

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

v.

CITY OF SAN JOSE, a municipal corporation; DECENA, Sgt.; CARNEY, Sgt.; MESSIER, Officer; NIEVES, Officer; MICHAEL FERNANDEZ, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer; WILLIAM MANION, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer; D. NEWMAN, Police Officer; San Jose Police Officer; KNOX, Police Officer, San Jose Police Officer; JORGE GIL-BLANCO, Officer; CHARLES GILLINGHAM, Sheriff; MARK TRACY, Sheriff; City of Capitola; DONALD BRAUNTON; M. LAPLANT, FBI Agent; KEITH LITTLE, Officer; SAN JOSE POLICE DEPT. NET ENTRY TEAM; SAN JOSE POLICE DEPT. M.E.R.G.E. UNIT #2; JAMES GREER; RONALD LEBAUDOUR; SANTA CLARA POLICE OFFICERS; COFFMAN, OFFICER; GILROY POLICE DEPT.,

Defendants,

No. 02-17132

D.C. No. CV-99-20022-JF

OPINION

and

ROBERT LINDERMAN, Deputy Sheriff, in his individual capacity,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of California Jeremy Fogel, District Judge, Presiding

Argued and Submitted December 3, 2003 – San Francisco, California

Filed April 4, 2005

Before: Richard A. Paez, Marsha S. Berzon, and Carlos T. Bea, Circuit Judges.

Opinion by Judge Paez; Partial Concurrence and Partial Dissent by Judge Bea

COUNSEL

Ann Miller Ravel, County Counsel, Winifred Bota, Deputy County Counsel, and Aryn Paid Harris, Deputy County Counsel, Office of the County Counsel, San Jose, California, for defendant-appellant Linderman.

Richard Doyle, City Attorney, Michael G. Groves, Senior Deputy City Attorney, Clifford Greenberg, Senior Deputy City Attorney, Office of the City Attorney, San Jose, California, for defendants-appellants Decena, Newman, Manion, Knox, Carney, Messier, and Nieves.

Karen L. Snell, Kate Dyer, and Marc H. Axelbaum, Clarence, Snell & Dyer, LLP, San Francisco, California, for the plaintiffs-appellees.

OPINION

PAEZ, Circuit Judge.

In this civil rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, Defendants-Appellants, seven San Jose City Police Officers ("SJPOs")[1] and Deputy Sheriff Linderman, appeal from an order of the district court denying in part their motions for qualified immunity. This action arises out of the simultaneous execution of search warrants at the residences of members of the Hells Angels, and at the Hells Angels clubhouse on January 21, 1998. While executing one of the search warrants at the residence of plaintiffs Lori and Robert Vieira, the officers shot two of the Vieiras' dogs. While searching plaintiff James Souza's property, the officers shot and killed one of Souza's dogs. During the course of the searches at all of the locations, the officers seized literally "truckloads" of personal property for the sole purpose of showing in a murder prosecution that the Hells Angels had common symbols, which in turn would qualify it as a criminal street gang and therefore support a sentencing enhancement under California Penal Code § 186.22 against the defendant in that case. In seizing this "indicia" evidence, the officers seized numerous expensive Harley-Davidson motorcycles, a concrete slab, and a refrigerator door and in so doing, caused significant damage to the items seized as well as to other property.

In their third amended complaint, the plaintiffs alleged that the searches violated the Fourth Amendment.

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[1] The SJPOs are defendants Sergeant Decena, Sergeant Carney, Officer Messier, Officer Nieves, Officer Manion, Officer Newman, and Officer Knox.

The defendants moved for summary judgment on the ground that they are entitled to qualified immunity. The district court, applying the two-part test established by the Supreme Court in *Saucier v. Katz*, 533 U.S. 194 (2001), for determining whether a public official is entitled to qualified immunity, denied their motions, in part. The SJPOs and Linderman appeal the denial of their motions for qualified immunity.

We affirm the district court's order denying the SJPOs and Linderman qualified immunity. We hold that Linderman's instruction to seize "truckloads" of personal property, including numerous motorcycles and a piece of concrete, for the sole purpose of proving that the Hells Angels was a gang was an unreasonable execution of the search warrants in violation of the Fourth Amendment. We further hold that at the time the searches were carried out the law was sufficiently clear to put a reasonable officer on fair notice that this conduct was unlawful.

We also hold that the shooting of the dogs at the Vieira and Souza residences was an unreasonable seizure, and an unreasonable execution of the search warrants, in violation of the Fourth Amendment. Exigent circumstances did not exist at either residence, as the SJPOs had a week to consider the options and tactics available for an encounter with the dogs. Nonetheless, the officers failed to develop a realistic plan for incapacitating the dogs other than shooting them. Finally, we hold that the unlawfulness of the officers' conduct would have been apparent to a reasonable officer at the time the officers planned for serving the search warrants.

I.

A. STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Events Leading to the January 21, 1998 Search

On August 24, 1997, Kevin Sullivan was beaten to death at the Pink Poodle nightclub in San Jose. Linderman of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office led the murder investigation. He ultimately determined that Steve Tausan, one of the nightclub's bouncers and a member of the San Jose Charter of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club ("SJHA"), committed the crime.[2] Linderman also suspected other SJHA members and associates of concealing evidence of the murder.[3]

The District Attorney's Office charged Tausan with the murder of Kevin Sullivan. On October 6, 1997, Linderman applied for a warrant to search the SJHA clubhouse and the residences of various individuals alleged to be affiliated with the Hells Angels. On the basis of Linderman's 27-page affidavit and the testimony of confidential informants, Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge John Ball issued the search warrants on the same day, authorizing a search of the clubhouse and the individual residences for a security videotape depicting the beating of

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[2] According to the security guard at the Pink Poodle, Kevin Sullivan was harassing a dancer at the nightclub and had been told that the Pink Poodle employed Hells Angels members as bodyguards. Sullivan responded with derogatory remarks about the Hells Angels. The owner of the nightclub called Tausan and told him what happened. Tausan allegedly arrived ten minutes later and beat and killed Sullivan.

[3] A witness told Linderman that there was a videotape of the incident made over the Pink Poodle security system. The witness stated that he believed that a copy of the tape had been given to the Hells Angels.

Sullivan, financial records connecting the Hells Angels to the Pink Poodle, and notes of a Hells Angels meeting held five nights after the killing. Police investigative officers recovered meeting minutes after several exhaustive searches, but failed to find the alleged videotape.[4]

In January 1998, the District Attorney's Office sought a second set of search warrants for nine residences and the SJHA clubhouse. In support of the application for the second set of warrants, Linderman submitted a 24-page affidavit, which incorporated his October 6, 1997 affidavit. Judge Ball issued the warrants as requested on January 20, 1998. The ten warrants were substantially identical except for the location and the name of the resident. The second set of warrants again authorized the seizure of a copy of the security videotape, and notes or records of a Hells Angels meeting held on the Friday following the murder of Sullivan.[5] Judge Ball also authorized a search for evidence that showed indicia of Hells Angels affiliation, including "any evidence of membership in, affiliation with, activity of, or identity of, any gang, including but not limited to, any reference to 'Hells Angels.'" The purpose of this provision in the warrants was to obtain evidence supporting a street gang sentencing enhancement against Tausan under California Penal Code § 186.22 because,

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[4] The October 7, 1997 search is not a subject of this appeal.

[5] In a ruling not at issue in this appeal, the district court ruled that the affidavit supporting the search warrant was insufficient to establish probable cause to search for the videotape or meeting notes. The court, however, found that the warrant was supported by probable cause for the purpose of seeking gang indicia evidence. The plaintiffs do not challenge the probable cause determination in this interlocutory appeal.

allegedly, the murder had been committed in furtherance of the criminal conduct of the Hells Angels "gang."

Prior to the January 1998 searches, the Sheriff's Office had arranged for assistance from multiple law enforcement agencies, including the San Jose City Police Department. There were two types of law-enforcement teams that assisted with the execution of the warrants. First, "entry teams" composed of San Jose City police officers were used to enter the premises surrounding the residences and secure safe entry into the residences. Once the location was secured, "search teams" composed only of officers from the Sheriff's Office were to conduct the searches and take possession of property covered by the warrant. Leaders of the entry teams were given approximately one-week advance notice of the action in order to prepare for the searches.

At 7:00 a.m. on the morning of January 21, 1998, teams of law enforcement officers simultaneously served the search warrants at residences of members of the Hells Angels in various parts of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. It is the conduct of the law enforcement personnel in carrying out these searches under the second set of warrants that gave rise to plaintiffs' claims.[6]

[6] The district court held that the search of Jeffrey Pettigrew's residence did not violate a clearly established constitutional right, and therefore, the defendants were entitled to qualified immunity with respect to that search. The plaintiffs have not challenged that ruling on appeal.

B. San Jose Police Officers

The role of the SJPOs was to effect entry and secure the premises at the various locations for the search teams. The Vieiras and Souza both had large, aggressive dogs. The SJPOs shot and killed dogs at both residences.

1) Souza Residence

The entry operation at the Souza home was supervised by Sergeant Decena, who learned about the search a week prior to the operation. Officer Newman supervised the search of Souza's residence. He obtained Souza's arrest record, which revealed that Souza had been arrested for weapons and narcotics charges. The team also received background information which showed that there were two guard dogs, one which was a Rottweiler, at the Souza residence. During surveillance before the search, the SJPOs saw a sign on Souza's side gate stating "Warning Property Protected By Guard Dog;" the officers also learned that Souza owned a Rottweiler that was known to attack without provocation.

The officers planned to gain entry into Souza's house by having a primary team go through the front door, while a secondary team entered through a side gate to secure the backyard and to allow for the safe search of a second smaller building. The plan was for the officers to make both entries simultaneously and to announce their presence with a knock notice at the front door.

The SJPOs planned either to isolate or to shoot the dogs, so they would not threaten the safety of the primary entry team. The officers had no plan to use non-lethal methods of incapacitation; nor did they have a specific

plan for "isolating" the dogs or any intention of giving Souza the opportunity to isolate his Rottweiler himself.

On the day of the search, the primary entry team entered through the front door of the main house[7] while the secondary team unsuccessfully tried to cut the lock on the side gate with bolt cutters. The secondary team's failure to gain entry through the gate caused them to enter the main house following the first team, at which point the secondary team informed the first team that they had failed to gain access to the backyard through the side gate. Although both teams were safely inside the house, the backyard remained unsecured and the dogs remained on the loose. We note, however, that because Souza was not home the teams could have conducted their search inside the house without hurriedly dealing with the dogs in the backyard.

Nonetheless, after entering the backyard through the main house, two of the officers proceeded to patrol the yard to look for the Rottweiler. Because miscellaneous objects and machinery strewn across the yard created obstacles to both motion and sight, the officers kept their firearms (MP-5 automatic rifles) drawn. Then, according to Officer Manion,

> [t]he [R]ottweiler suddenly appeared around the corner, approaching from the west at a distance of about ten to fifteen feet. It looked at me, gave a low growl, and started advancing toward me. I feared that the dog was going to attack me and I

[7] Souza was not home, so the entry team members broke down the front door after receiving no answer to their knock.

> immediately discharged my firearm pulling the trigger twice.

Officer Manion's shots killed the Rottweiler instantly. The SJPOs left unharmed a small white dog that was also present but was judged to pose no threat once the Rottweiler had been killed.

2) Vieira Residence

Sergeant Carney supervised the search operation for the Vieira residence and was given about a week to plan the search. Like Souza, the Vieiras had not been accused of any crime. Officer Messier, the team leader, conducted surveillance and gathered intelligence several days prior to the operation which revealed that: (1) Robert Vieira had prior weapons-related convictions; (2) the Vieira property included a residence and a junkyard completely encircled by a tall, padlocked, cyclone fence, and (3) there might be dogs, although the number and breed were unknown. Messier assigned Officer Nieves the task of handling any dogs that might be present. The plan for entering the property was to cut the lock on the outer fence, approach the house, give knock-notice, then enter and secure the house.

At the Santa Clara Sheriff's Office briefing on the morning of the operation, Sergeant Carney was told that the Vieira property, in particular, was guarded by three large dogs. Officer Nieves, who was assigned the duty of protecting the entry team, planned to deal with the dogs in the following manner: First, he hoped that the dogs would not appear at the gate. If they did, he planned to poke them through the fence with his shotgun and try to scare them. (Officer Nieves carried a shotgun specifically

because of the possible presence of dogs.) If that did not work, he planned to assess the situation and engage the dogs, to ensure the safety of the entry team. Because the SJPOs believed that they needed to secure quick entry to preserve an element of surprise and prevent the possible destruction of evidence, they had no intention of calling on the Vieiras to control their dogs.

When the entry team approached the Vieiras' gate, three large dogs resembling Bullmastiffs emerged and ran toward the gate barking and growling. As the officers stuck their hands through the fence to cut the lock, one of the dogs jumped and snapped at their hands. Although the SJPOs were armed with pepper spray, no officer attempted to use the spray to subdue the dogs.[8] Instead, Officer Nieves attempted to scare the dogs away by yelling at them and pushing one of the dogs back with the barrel of his shotgun. The dogs, however, would not retreat, and the persistent barking caused Officer Nieves to fear that the surprise of the mission might be compromised.

Officer Nieves pointed his shotgun at one of the barking dogs and shot it. The first dog went down, but the second dog did not retreat. Officer Nieves shot at the second dog twice, critically wounding it, causing it and the third dog to retreat.[9] Although he had already shot the first dog at point blank range, Officer Nieves testified that the dog "was apparently trying to get back up . . . [a]nd in an effort to ensure that he wasn't going to attack or be a

[8] The officers did not bring with them any of the variety of non-lethal "pain compliance" weapons used by police forces, such as tasers or stunbag shotguns.

[9] The second dog was later taken by an Animal Control Officer and euthanized due to extensive injury.

problem for the team," Officer Nieves fired a fourth shot at the dog's head, killing it. The SJPOs left unharmed the third dog, which retreated to a hiding place away from the officers, and the fourth dog, which was chained in the backyard.

Meanwhile, the noise outside awoke Robert Vieira. He emerged from the house at the second floor balcony just as the officers gained entry through the gate. The police instructed him to remain where he was with his hands up. An officer broke through the front door using a ram. When the SJPOs reached Robert Vieira, they located a firearm propped up against the bedroom window.

C. Linderman's Seizure of "All" Indicia of Membership In the Hells Angels

The January search warrants included a provision for the seizure of property with indicia of Hells Angels affiliation, to assist the prosecution in obtaining evidence to support a gang sentencing enhancement against Tausan under Penal Code § 186.22. To this end, the search warrants authorized seizure of:

> Any evidence of membership in affiliation with, activity of, or identity of, any gang, including but not limited to, any reference to "Hells Angels," "HA", "Red & White", "81", "Big Red Machine", "HAMC", including, but not limited to, "West Coast OM notes", "East Coast OM notes", "BHC newsletter", including, but not limited to, drawings, paintings, photographs, photograph albums, videotapes, writings, furniture, furnishings, fixtures, and objects known, or which may appear by content, to depict or contain mention of membership in, affiliation with, activity of, or identity of,

> any gang, including, but not limited to, the following: names, initials, and monikers of known, or which may appear by content, to be gang members or affiliates; acronyms, logos, slogans, symbols, signs, and expressions known, or which may appear by content, to identify a gang or any of its members or affiliates; and identifying numbers, colors, and expressions of a geographic region with which a gang is known, or which may appear by content, to associate. . . .

On the day of the January 1998 search, separate search teams from the Santa Clara Sheriff's Office conducted the searches and seizures once the various premises were secured. Although Linderman did not personally participate in the execution of all of the warrants, he coordinated the efforts of the law enforcement agencies, made the initial risk assessment with respect to each location, and answered questions called in by officers at the search sites.

The search teams at the Hells Angels' residences found that there were numerous items that bore indicia of Hells Angels affiliation. Fearing that they might take too many items, several officers called Linderman to clarify what items should be seized. Linderman instructed them to take everything that constituted "indicia" of Hells Angels affiliation as defined in the warrant, including belts, jewelry, plaques, t-shirts, hats, watches, vests, calendars, clocks, sculptures, photographs, and correspondence. The officers conducting the searches also took larger articles such as motorcycles, a mailbox, a refrigerator door with decals, and a cement portion of the driveway in front of the clubhouse containing the signatures of Hells Angels members. At the end of the searches, the teams carted away "literally truckloads of Hells Angels indicia"

and had to rent special offsite storage to accommodate the large amount of evidence.

II.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

We review *de novo* a district court's decision regarding qualified immunity. *Elder v. Holoway*, 510 U.S. 510, 516 (1994). The evidence must be viewed in the light most favorable to the non-movant. *Oliver v. Keller*, 289 F.3d 623, 626 (9th Cir.2002). "To the extent that the defendants' arguments quibble with the district court's view of the facts, we do not consider them. We view the evidence in the light most favorable to the plaintiffs." *Ganwich v. Knapp*, 319 F.3d 1115, 1119 n.5 (9th Cir.2003).

Qualified immunity serves to shield government officials "from liability for civil damages insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 818 (1982). The Supreme Court has set forth a two-pronged inquiry to resolve all qualified immunity claims. First, "taken in the light most favorable to the party asserting the injury, do the facts alleged show the officers' conduct violated a constitutional right?" *Saucier*, 533 U.S. at 201. Second, if so, was that right clearly established? *Id.* "The relevant, dispositive inquiry in determining whether a right is clearly established is whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted." *Id.* at 202. This inquiry is wholly objective and is undertaken in light of the specific factual circumstances of the case. *Id.* at 201; *see also Sorrels v. McKee*, 290 F.3d 965, 970 (9th Cir.2002).

III.

DISCUSSION

A. Search for All Indicia of Hells Angels Affiliation

We affirm the district court's denial of qualified immunity to Deputy Sheriff Linderman.

The plaintiffs allege that Linderman's instruction to seize every item with indicia of Hells Angels affiliation, including customized Harley-Davidson motorcycles and a refrigerator door, was an unreasonable execution of the search warrants in violation of their Fourth Amendment rights. They further argue that the manner in which the warrants were executed under Linderman's instructions was unreasonable because the officers caused unnecessary destruction of property, including jack-hammering the sidewalk in front of the Hells Angels clubhouse to remove a piece of concrete with the Hells Angels' names. The plaintiffs argue this conduct violated their Fourth Amendment right to be free of "unnecessarily destructive behavior, beyond that necessary to execute a warrant effectively." *Liston v. County of Riverside*, 120 F.3d 965, 979 (9th Cir. 1997).

The test of what is necessary to "execute a warrant effectively" is reasonableness. "An officer's conduct in executing a search is subject to the Fourth Amendment's mandate of reasonableness from the moment of the officer's entry until the moment of departure." *Lawmaster v. Ward*, 125 F.3d 1341, 1349 (10th Cir. 1997). "When officers obtain a warrant to search an individual's home, they also receive certain limited rights to occupy and control the property; however, the Fourth Amendment binds the officers such that the right to search a home concomitantly

obliges the officers to do so in a reasonable manner." *Id.* at 1350.

In examining whether Linderman caused the officers to execute the warrants unreasonably, "it is proper to consider both the purpose disclosed in the application for a warrant's issuance and the manner of its execution." *United States v. Rettig*, 589 F.2d 418, 423 (9th Cir. 1978). This is because "[t]he standard of reasonableness embodied in the Fourth Amendment demands that the showing of justification match the degree of intrusion." *Berger v. New York*, 388 U.S. 41, 70 (1967) (Stewart, J., concurring). Here, the January 1998 search warrants authorized a search of the Hells Angels' residences for (1) a videotape of scenes from the Pink Poodle on August 24, 1997; (2) indicia of Hells Angels affiliation or membership; and (3) notes or records of meetings at the Hells Angels clubhouse. Although the officers did not find the videotape or meeting notes, the officers seized numerous items of Hells Angels indicia. It is the manner in which the officers carried out this latter objective that, in part, led to the plaintiffs' civil rights action. Viewing the facts in the light most favorable to the plaintiffs, we conclude that the authority to seize indicia evidence to support a sentencing enhancement against Tausan did not justify the level of intrusion and excessive property damage that occurred during the search of the various locations.

The search for indicia of Hells Angels affiliation served a limited purpose. The property here in dispute was not evidence of a crime; rather, the justification for seizing the indicia evidence was to support a sentencing enhancement against Tausan. As Linderman explained at his deposition, the indicia evidence was "evidence towards the gang enhancement. That's what it was being seized

for." In the Tausan murder trial, the prosecution sought to prove the applicability of a three-year sentencing enhancement by showing that Tausan was a member of an "ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons . . . having a common sign or symbol." Cal. Penal Code § 186.22. The prosecution sought this evidence from the plaintiffs, who were neither codefendants with Tausan in the murder trial nor charged with any crime. To prove the sentencing enhancement, the officers seized "literally truckloads" of evidence. The officers seized belts, jewelry, plaques, t-shirts, hats, watches, vests, calendars, clocks, sculptures, photographs, and correspondence. They seized the plaintiffs' Harley-Davidson motorcycles, most worth over $20,000, because they contained indicia of Hells Angels affiliation. The officers jack-hammered and removed a piece of the sidewalk in front of the Hells Angels clubhouse because some of the members' names were written on it. The officers also removed the door to the (working) clubhouse refrigerator because it had a Hells Angels decal on it. The clubhouse mailbox and clubhouse street sign that read "Angels Place" were also seized.

As the Eighth Circuit noted in reviewing a similar warrant for indicia evidence (also served on the Hells Angels), such evidence diminishes in evidentiary value the more evidence is seized:

> The indicia warrants, like many warrants, authorized the search of nearly every corner of the residence. Unlike most warrants, these warrants were issued to obtain evidence on just one fact – membership in the Hells Angels. Unlike most warrants, the evidence on this issue would be needlessly cumulative once enough evidence was obtained to establish membership. While additional evidence would usually show the breadth

> of criminal activity, in the instant case additional evidence would at some point have no additional probative value in determining membership.

United States v. Apker, 705 F.2d 293, 302 (8th Cir.), *modified on other grounds, United States v. Fitzgerald*, 724 F.2d 633 (8th Cir. 1983) (en banc). Despite the "truckloads" of evidence seized during the searches, the prosecution only presented a few seized photographs at Tausan's trial. The motorcycles, concrete slab, and refrigerator door were not offered to support the gang enhancement at Tausan's trial.

Although the seizure of the indicia evidence was for the limited purpose of establishing a sentencing enhancement against Tausan, Linderman nonetheless instructed every officer who called him to seize anything with Hells Angels indicia.[10] In so doing Linderman asserts that he was simply complying with the terms of the search warrants and that the officers executed the warrants in a lawful manner. Testimony of other officers involved in the searches, however, shows that at least some questioned whether this extensive seizure was necessary. Officer Faler testified that he was "surprised" when Linderman told him to seize everything because "[i]t just seemed like

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[10] When Deputy Sergeant Denis called about the motorcycles at the Pettigrew residence, Linderman instructed Sergeant Denis to seize them. He gave the same answer to Deputy Bacon when he called about a motorcycle at the residence of Fillmore Cross and to Deputy Greer when he called about a motorcycle at the residence of James and Marnie Arnett. When Deputy Pennington called Linderman about the piece of concrete with the names of Hells Angels members to ask "did he want me to go through the trouble to have somebody come down with a cement saw," Linderman said to remove the piece of concrete. Linderman personally made the decision to seize the motorcycle at Ted DeMello's address when he was present at the search, and signed the inventory sheet.

there were so many items in there that had Hells Angels or – as described on the search warrant, that it just seemed like we had more than enough." Officer Tomlinson testified that "there's an implied reasonable there" and it "never occurred to me to take the motorcycle" even though it had a Hells Angels decal on it.

Linderman's primary defense is that the warrants specified the quantity and kind of evidence to be seized, and that he had no power to deviate from the explicit specifications. Linderman's argument depends on reading the word "any" in the search warrant as equivalent to "all" – and the concomitant assumption that he not only had the power to seize "all" indicia evidence, but could not lawfully exercise his discretion to seize anything less. This argument is unpersuasive. First, the word "any" in the search warrants did not mean "all." The relevant text of each search warrant itself draws a distinction between "any" and "all." While the search warrants authorized the search for "any" indicia evidence, at another point the search warrants authorized the search for "any *and all* yards, garages . . . for the following property." (emphasis added). Plaintiffs also point to the first definition of "any" in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: "one or some indiscriminately of whatever kind, . . . one or another taken at random <ask any man you meet>." As the district court noted in denying Linderman's Motion for Reconsideration, "a directive that the search teams seize only a sampling of gang indicia from each location would have complied with the literal terms of the search warrant and would not have required Linderman to substitute his own discretion for the terms of the warrant itself."

Second, even assuming Linderman's construction of "any" as "all," while the search warrant gave Linderman

the power to instruct the officers to seize items with Hells Angels indicia, it did not mandate that he order them to seize everything complying with the literal terms of the warrant. The purpose of having a particularized, as opposed to general, warrant is to "'assure [] the individual whose property is searched or seized of the lawful authority of the executing officer, his need to search, and the limits of his power to search.'" *Groh v. Ramirez*, 540 U.S. 551, 561 (2004) (quoting *United States v. Chadwick*, 433 U.S. 1, 9 (1977)). In other words, a search warrant gives an officer the "power" to seize the items specified in the warrant. While an officer generally does not have the power to seize anything not specified in the warrant, he retains discretion over the execution of the search and, as is implicit in the word "power," can exercise discretion to leave items that may arguably come within the literal terms of the search warrant.[11]

Moreover, the record indicates that other officers understood that they had discretion not to seize some items with Hells Angels indicia. Lori Vieira's journal,

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[11] Linderman nonetheless asserts that he had no discretion. For support, he cites *Marron v. United States*, which stated that "[a]s to what is to be taken, nothing is left to the discretion of the officer executing the warrant." 275 U.S. 192, 196 (1927). Linderman, however, misunderstands *Marron*. *Marron* stands for the proposition that an officer has no discretion to seize items *not* listed on a warrant meeting the Fourth Amendment's particularity requirement. As the search warrant delineates the officer's power to search, the officer has no "discretion" to exceed that power. An officer, however, does retain discretion as to how to reasonably execute a search. "It is difficult to imagine that a case could arise where an officer executing a valid search warrant would not at some stage in the matter be required in the very nature of things to exercise his judgment as to what thing or things or person or persons were to be seized under the warrant." *Strauss v. Stynchcombe*, 165 S.E.2d 302, 307 (Ga.1968).

introduced as an exhibit at her deposition, recounts a conversation during the search with Officer Garcia who supposedly said he was going to seize her "blue bus" because it had a Hells Angels sticker on it, but "decided not to." Linderman's position, however, is that the warrant *required* seizure of the bus because it had a Hells Angels decal. Similar to that position is a hypothetical raised in the district court hearing on May 28, 2002: If a Hells Angels member lived in a mansion made of stone with columns all around it and decided to write his initials on every column, would that give law enforcement officers the power to tear out a column as evidence that he lived there if the warrant authorized the seizure of any evidence proving that he did? The answer is clearly no.

The unreasonable nature of Linderman's instructions to seize all evidence of indicia is highlighted by the destruction of property caused by the seizures. In executing the warrants, the officers cut the mailbox off its post, jackhammered the sidewalk outside the clubhouse, and broke the SJHA's refrigerator. This "unnecessarily destructive behavior, beyond that necessary to execute [the] warrant[s] effectively, violates the Fourth Amendment." *Liston*, 120 F.3d at 979.

We also hold that at the time Linderman directed the officers to seize "truckloads" of Hells Angels indicia in support of a sentencing enhancement, even if it meant removing a refrigerator door, "it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted." *Saucier*, 533 U.S. at 202. At the time the warrants were served, a reasonable officer would have been aware that an unreasonable execution of a search warrant violated the Fourth Amendment. *See Liston*, 120 F.3d at 979; *see also Lawmaster*, 125 F.3d at

1349. Linderman knew that the search for indicia evidence was for the limited purpose of establishing that the Hells Angels was a gang. Despite this limited purpose, he instructed officers to seize numerous expensive motorcycles, a piece of concrete, and a refrigerator door. None of these items, not even photographs of these items, were presented at Tausan's trial.

Linderman argues that he nonetheless is entitled to qualified immunity because there is no clearly established law in this case-specific context. Linderman is not entitled to qualified immunity "simply because there [is] no case on all fours prohibiting [this] particular manifestation of unconstitutional conduct." *Headwaters Forest Def. v. County of Humboldt*, 276 F.3d 1125, 1131 (9th Cir.), *cert. denied, County of Humboldt v. Burton*, 537 U.S. 1000 (2002) (quoting *Deorle v. Rutherford*, 272 F.3d 1272, 1274-75 (9th Cir. 2001)). There need not be prior authority dealing with this precise factual situation in order to deny Linderman qualified immunity for his actions. *See, e.g., Hope v. Pelzer*, 536 U.S. 730, 739 (2002); *Sorrels*, 290 F.3d at 970. Rather, the state of the law at the time the warrants were served must have provided Linderman with "fair warning" that his conduct was unconstitutional. *See Hope*, 536 U.S. at 741. We conclude that it did and that the unlawfulness of Linderman's conduct would be apparent to a reasonable officer.[12] Accordingly, we affirm the district court's denial of qualified immunity in this instance.

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[12] Indeed, several officers executing the search questioned whether the extensive seizure was necessary, indicating their understanding that the warrant did not *require* seizure of *all* material coming within its terms.

B. Shooting of the Dogs

We also affirm the denial of qualified immunity to the SJPOs involved in the shooting of the dogs at the Souza and Vieira residences.

"[T]he destruction of property by state officials poses as much of a threat, if not more, to people's right to be 'secure . . . in their effects' as does the physical taking of them." *Fuller v. Vines*, 36 F.3d 65, 68 (9th Cir. 1994), *overruled on other grounds, Robinson v. Solano County*, 278 F.3d 1007, 1013 (9th Cir. 2002) (citation omitted). "The killing of [a] dog is a destruction recognized as a seizure under the Fourth Amendment" and can constitute a cognizable claim under § 1983. *Id.*

Reasonableness is the touchstone of any seizure under the Fourth Amendment. Thus, to comply with the Fourth Amendment, the seizure – in this case, shooting and death – of the Vieiras' and Souza's dogs must have been reasonable under the circumstances. We look to the totality of the circumstances to determine whether the destruction of property was reasonably necessary to effectuate the performance of the law enforcement officer's duties. *See Deorle*, 272 F.3d at 1279. "A seizure becomes unlawful when it is 'more intrusive than necessary.'" *Ganwich*, 319 F.3d at 1122 (quoting *Florida v. Royer*, 460 U.S. 491, 504 (1983)). To determine whether the shooting of the dogs was reasonable, we balance "the nature and quality of the intrusion on the individual's Fourth Amendment interests against the countervailing governmental interests at stake." *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted).

Here, the intrusion was severe. The officers shot and killed one of Souza's dogs, and two of the Vieiras' dogs. We

have recognized that dogs are more than just a personal effect. *See Miller v. Clark County*, 340 F.3d 959, 968 n.13 (9th Cir. 2003). The emotional attachment to a family's dog is not comparable to a possessory interest in furniture. As noted in Lori Vieira's journal, the effect of her being handcuffed just yards from where her dog Sam lay dead and bleeding was extremely traumatic.[13]

Viewing the facts in the light most favorable to the Vieras and Souza, the seizures were unreasonable, in violation of the Fourth Amendment. Most important, both entry teams had a week to plan the execution of the entry. At the Souza residence, despite advance knowledge of the presence of two guard dogs, the full extent of the plan to protect the entry team from the dogs was to either "isolate" or shoot the dogs. The officers had no specific plan for isolating the dogs. At the Vieira residence, Officer Nieves was in charge of handling the dogs. According to Officer Messier's declaration, "Officer Nieves was assigned to deal with dogs if there were any, *which is why he had a shotgun* and was first in the stacking order. However, I did not give Officer Nieves any specific instructions as to how to deal with any dogs." (emphasis added). Officer Nieves's "little plan" consisted of first hoping that the dogs would not appear at the gate. If they did, he planned to poke them through the fence with his shotgun to try and scare them.

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[13] At Lori Viera's deposition, she testified that she wrote in her journal, "I had to stand again not far from by [sic] poor dog (Sam). By now blood had drained from him and was running down the driveway. (I am crying now because I can see him, laying there, and all that blood. All that blood, for what.)"

If that did not work, he planned to "engage"[14] the dogs to ensure the safety of the entry team. In short, as the district court concluded, despite a week to plan for the entry, the officers developed no realistic plan other than shooting the dogs while serving the search warrants.

Nonetheless, the officers identify three governmental interests to justify the intrusion: (1) the law enforcement interests in accomplishing the goals of the search warrant, *i.e.*, seeking evidence of a murder; (2) the need for stealth and speed, coupled with the fact that the searches were simultaneous (in order to avoid one subject informing others); and (3) the safety of the officers.

Although the search warrants were obtained in connection with a murder investigation, none of the plaintiffs were potential suspects. The defendants were seeking a videotape and meeting minutes as evidence of the murder at the Pink Poodle. As the district court concluded, however, there was insufficient probable cause to believe that either the videotape or the meeting minutes would be found at the residences. The district court ruled that the warrants were supported by probable cause only with respect to the search for evidence with indicia of Hells Angels affiliation.[15]

The SJPOs' contention that shooting the dogs was necessary to preserve stealth is equally unpersuasive. It

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[14] At Nieves' deposition, he conceded that when he said he "engaged" the dogs, he meant that he aimed his shotgun and shot at the dogs.

[15] Again we do not review the determination that there was probable cause to search for indicia lacking any connection to the defendant, as the issue is not before us.

was the officers' own method of entry that compromised their ability to effectuate a quiet entry. At the Souza residence, the SJPOs used a ram to break down the front door before they even dealt with the dogs; at the Vieira residence, the residents were awakened not by the barking of their dogs, but rather by the four shotgun blasts discharged at the dogs. If Officer Nieves truly feared that continued barking would "alert the residents and possibly jeopardize the mission," it was an unreasonable response – indeed, an utterly irrational one – to fire four shotgun blasts to "engage" the dogs. All of the above considerations support the conclusion that the officers violated the plaintiffs' Fourth Amendment rights by unnecessarily shooting the dogs.

While the governmental interest of safety might have provided a sound justification for the intrusion had the officers been surprised by the presence of the dogs, the same reasoning is less convincing given the undisputed fact that the officers knew about the dogs a week before they served the search warrants. The officers had substantial time to develop strategies for immobilizing the dogs. They knew or should reasonably have known that the Fourth Amendment requires officers to avoid intruding more than is necessary to enforce a search warrant. *See Ganwich*, 319 F.3d at 1122. As the district court explained, the officers "created an entry plan designed to bring them into proximity of the dogs without providing themselves with any non-lethal means for controlling the dogs. The officers, in effect, left themselves without any option but to kill the dogs in the event they – quite predictably – attempted to guard the home from invasion."

Having determined that the officers violated the plaintiffs' Fourth Amendment rights for purposes of the

first step in the qualified immunity analysis, the second step asks whether the constitutional right was clearly established. As the Supreme Court has cautioned, it is not enough that there is a generally established proposition that excessive use of force is unlawful. *Saucier*, 533 U.S. at 202. "[T]he right that the official is alleged to have violated must have been 'clearly established' in a more particularized, and hence more relevant, sense: The contours of the right must be sufficiently clear that a reasonable official would understand that what he is doing violates that right." *Id.*

However, "it is not necessary that the alleged acts have been previously held unconstitutional, as long as the unlawfulness [of defendant's actions] was apparent in light of pre-existing law." *Sorrels*, 290 F.3d at 970 (citation omitted) (alteration in original). "In other words, while there may be no published cases holding similar policies unconstitutional, this may be due more to the obviousness of the illegality than the novelty of the legal issue." *Id.* In *Hope*, the Supreme Court recognized that previous cases do not have to be "fundamentally similar" and that officials can still be on notice even in novel factual circumstances. 536 U.S. at 741. Both parties concede that the ultimate question is whether the state of the law at the time was clear enough to provide reasonable officers with sufficient notice that their conduct was unlawful.

Prior to the events at issue in this case, we had held that unnecessary destruction of property in the course of executing a warrant is unconstitutional. *Liston*, 120 F.3d at 979. We also had held that the killing of a person's dog constitutes an unconstitutional destruction of property absent a sufficiently compelling public interest. *See Fuller*, 36 F.3d at 68; *see also Brown v. Muhlenberg Twp.*, 269 F.3d

205, 211-12 (3d Cir. 2001); *Lesher v. Reed*, 12 F.3d 148, 150-51 (8th Cir. 1994). We also had recognized that in assessing reasonableness under the Fourth Amendment an appropriate factor is whether the officer considered alternatives before undertaking intrusive activity implicating constitutional concerns. *See Chew v. Gates*, 27 F.3d 1432, 1440 n.5 (9th Cir. 1994); *see also Gutierrez v. City of San Antonio*, 139 F.3d 441, 450 (5th Cir. 1998).[16] These cases should have alerted any reasonable officer that the Fourth Amendment forbids the killing of a person's dog, or the destruction of a person's property, when that destruction is unnecessary – *i.e.*, when less intrusive, or less destructive, alternatives exist. A reasonable officer should have known that to create a plan to enter the perimeter of a person's property, knowing all the while about the presence of dogs on the property, without considering a method for subduing the dogs besides killing them, would violate the Fourth Amendment.

It is no doubt true, as the Third Circuit's *Brown* case hypothesized, that there are potential cases in which the state's interest may be sufficiently compelling to "justify the extreme intrusion occasioned by the destruction of the pet." *Brown*, 269 F.3d at 210-11. However, *Brown* discussed cases where dangerous animals, *e.g.*, lions, were roaming free endangering the public, not situations where officers intentionally entered into the enclosed perimeter of the property where lawfully held dogs were present to protect the property from unlawful intruders.

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[16] After the events in this case, we also applied this principle in *Headwaters Forest Defense*, 276 F.3d at 1131 (holding that the use of pepper spray was not justified when protesters could have been removed in another less intrusive manner).

Finally, this case is not the kind where the officer was reacting to a sudden unexpected situation, where the officers were confronted with exigent circumstances. The Fourth Amendment allows officers to use a certain amount of force because they are "often forced to make split-second judgments – in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving. . . . " *Graham*, 490 U.S. at 397. In this case, however, the SJPOs were given a week to plan the entry. Other than the officers' interest in preserving evidence, the officers were not presented with exigent circumstances that necessitated killing the dogs. Accordingly, the failure to develop any realistic non-lethal plan for dealing with the dogs is simply not the type of reasonable mistake in judgment to which a court should give deference in determining whether the officers are entitled to qualified immunity.[17]

In sum, in these circumstances, a reasonable officer would have known that the killing of the dogs at the Souza and Viera residences was unlawful. Thus, we affirm the district court's denial of the SJPOs' motion for qualified immunity.

AFFIRMED.

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[17] The police officers' opportunity to plan ahead distinguishes this case from the recent Supreme Court decision, *Brosseau v. Haugen*, 125 S.Ct. 596 (2004) (holding that there was qualified immunity for police officers who were considering "whether to shoot a disturbed felon, set on avoiding capture through vehicular flight, when persons in the immediate area are at risk from that flight"). In this case, there was no element of surprise coloring the officers' judgment.

BEA, Circuit Judge, concurring in part and dissenting in part:

I agree with almost all of the majority opinion. For the officers here to have conducted these searches without any plan by which to control the dogs other than to shoot them is outrageous, especially given that they knew about the dogs well in advance. Clearly, a reasonable officer would have understood that his actions violated an established right of the plaintiffs. I must dissent, however, from part III.A of the majority's opinion. I would reverse the district court's order denying Deputy Sheriff Linderman qualified immunity.

Judge Ball issued several search warrants on January 20, 1998. The issue here is whether the evidence, taken in the light most favorable to the plaintiffs, establishes that Officer Linderman's instructions to seize "all" evidence covered by the search warrant violated an established constitutional right of the plaintiffs, and whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his conduct was unlawful in the situation Linderman confronted. *See Saucier v. Katz*, 533 U.S. 194, 201 (2001); *Lee v. Gregory*, 363 F.3d 931, 934-36 (9th Cir. 2004).

Here, the precise language of the warrants is important. The warrants *commanded* (not authorized) the officers to seize a very broad range of evidence in search of several crimes:

> YOU ARE THEREFORE COMMANDED, in the daytime, to make search of premises . . . for the following property:
>
> 1) A video tape or copy thereof depicting scenes and images from the Pink Poodle night club on or about August

24, 1997 in all of the described premises;

2) Any evidence of membership in, affiliation ~~with~~, activity of, or identity of, any gang, including but not limited to, any reference to "Hells Angels," "HA", "Red & White," "81", "Big Red Machine", "HAMC", including, but not limited to, "West Coast OM notes," "East Coast OM notes", "BHC newsletter", including, but not limited to drawings, paintings, photographs, photograph albums, videotapes, writings, furniture, furnishings, fixtures, and objects known, or which may appear by content, to depict or contain mention of membership in, affiliation with, activity of, or identity of, any gang, including, but not limited to, the following: names, initials, and monikers of known, or which may appear by signs, and expressions known, or which may appear by content, to identify a gang or any of its members or affiliates; and identifying numbers, colors, and expressions of a geographic region with which a gang is known, or which may appear by content, to associate;

3) Notes or records of the Hells Angel meeting at the Hells Angel Clubhouse, . . . on Friday, August 29, 1997 and July through November 1996;

And if you find the same or any part thereof, to hold such property in your possession under California Penal Code Section 1536, or to release

> the property to the appropriate agency for state or federal forfeiture proceedings.

The district court denied Linderman's motion for summary judgment based on qualified immunity, reasoning that because the word "any" could be read to mean "one, some or all," Linderman had a duty to take only a representative sampling. The word "any" can mean "all" just as easily as it can mean "some." Webster's defines the word "any" as:

> 1: one or some indiscriminately of whatever kind: a: one or another taken at random <ask *any* man you meet> b: **EVERY** – used to indicate one selected without restriction <*any* child would know that>;
>
> 2: one, some, or all indiscriminately of whatever quantity: a: one or more – used to indicate an undetermined number or amount <have you *any* money> b: **ALL** – used to indicate a maximum or whole <needs *any* help he can get> c: a or some without reference to quantity or extent <grateful for *any* favor at all>;
>
> 3a: **unmeasured or unlimited in amount, number, or extent** <*any* quantity you desire> b: appreciably large or extended <could not endure it *any* length of time>.

WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD COLLEGE DICTIONARY (4th ed. 2002) (bold emphasis added). Given that Linderman was commanded to seize any evidence meeting the broad description in the warrant, he was not unreasonable in construing the warrant literally, and certainly it is not clear that a reasonable officer would have known that Linderman's conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted. The officers were searching for evidence of a

murder, possibly gang related. This was not a traffic offense they were investigating.[1] There was also a strong suspicion that other members of the Hells Angels might have been involved in covering up evidence of the crime.

Plaintiffs do not claim that Linderman told the other officers to seize property that fell outside the scope of the warrant. The refrigerator door, the mailbox, the motorcycles, and especially the portion of the sidewalk in front of the clubhouse in which members of the Hells Angels had written their names in the concrete while it was still wet, all contained indicia of the club's existence and the composition of its membership, essential evidence to prove the gang enhancement under California Penal Code section 186.22. Neither is there any evidence that Linderman knew exactly which gang indicia would establish that Tausan was a member of the Hells Angels gang, and had committed the murder pursuant to gang activities. Tausan could well have had a nickname or used a symbol to identify himself.

The district court found that because a representative sampling of gang indicia evidence would have sufficed to prove the existence of the Hells Angels, Linderman's

[1] The majority opinion minimizes the importance of the searches by stating: "The property here in dispute was not evidence of a crime; rather, the justification for seizing the indicia evidence was to support a sentencing enhancement against Steve Tausan." Majority Op. at 3955. The majority opinion is mistaken. The warrants read that the police were to look for "evidence of the commission of felonies, to wit: violations of (California Penal Code Section 187 (murder), Penal Code Section 211 (robbery)), and (evidence of active participation in the felonious conduct of a criminal street gang as defined in Penal Code § 186.22)." (capitalization altered).

instructions to seize "all" of the evidence were unreasonable. The district court, and the majority opinion, rule that Linderman was required to exercise discretion in deciding how much evidence was enough. The law does not impose such a burden on police officers.

In support of the proposition that police officers have a duty to seize only a sampling of indicia evidence, the majority opinion cites *Liston v. County of Riverside*, 120 F.3d 965, 979 (9th Cir. 1997) and *United States v. Apker*, 705 F.2d 293, 302 (8th Cir.), *abrogated on other grounds, United States v. Fitzgerald*, 724 F.2d 633 (8th Cir. 1983). Both cases are inapposite here.

In *Liston*, the police were sued for destruction of property and unreasonably detaining the homeowners when they executed a search warrant for a previous owner, James Rocky Hill, upon the new owners of a home, the Listons. The district court denied the officers' motion for summary judgment based on qualified immunity. This court affirmed in relevant part, holding there were material issues of fact for a jury as to whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that the conduct of the officers who conducted the search for Hill's effects was unlawful, when the search was effected on the Listons, not Hill, the suspect named in the warrant.

The evidence produced by plaintiffs included evidence that the police had broken through their front door with a battering ram, thrown Mr. Liston to the floor injuring him, pointed a gun at Mr. Liston's face even though he was not resisting the police, and held the entire family for several minutes while the police went through the house "trashing" it. *Id.* at 970-71. The Listons offered undisputed claims that the officers destroyed the front door, broke

down the fences surrounding the backyard, dug holes in the backyard and left garbage and the Liston's personal property throughout the house. *Id.* at 972.

The Listons also produced evidence that the police did all this after the Listons informed the police that they had just purchased the house from Hill, the subject of the warrant; the police saw a "For Sale" sign in the yard which said the house had "Sold"; and, the police found the escrow papers for the sale from Hill to the Listons and Mr. Liston's driver's license. *Id.* Mrs. Liston testified that the police knew they were in the wrong house and were making jokes about it shortly after they entered the house. *Id.* at 972. In light of the evidence that the police were acting outside the scope of the warrant, this court held that such evidence raised a fact question as to whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted and precluded summary judgment based on qualified immunity. *Id.*

As the court recognized in *Liston*, it was not clear the destruction of property by itself violated a constitutional right. "[O]fficers executing a search warrant occasionally 'must damage property in order to perform their duty.'" *Id.* at 979 (quoting *Dalia v. United States*, 441 U.S. 238, 258 (1979)). "Until the officers learned that they were in the wrong house, the officers could have reasonably believed, under these precedents, that the way they conducted the search was lawful. As a result, they would be entitled to qualified immunity. But once they knew the house

belonged to the Listons, their search was no longer justified." *Id.*[2]

There is no claim that Linderman executed the search warrants at the wrong location or upon the wrong people, nor that the officers destroyed any property that did not fall within the scope of the warrant.

Apker also involved a question different from the one presented here. *Apker*, did not hold that officers have a duty to take only a representative sample of evidence described in an indicia warrant. In *Apker*, the appellants challenged the indicia warrants as violating the requirement under the Fourth Amendment that the things to be seized be described with particularity. The court in *Apker* ruled that the indicia warrants did not meet the Fourth Amendment's particularity requirement and consequently the seizure was unlawful. 705 F.2d at 297-98.

The plaintiffs here also challenged the warrants. The district court found that the affidavit supporting the search warrants was insufficient to establish probable cause to search for the videotape or meeting notes. However, the court found that the warrants were supported by probable cause for the purpose of seeking gang indicia evidence. Plaintiffs did not appeal this ruling. It is not clear whether the plaintiffs also challenged the warrants

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[2] The hypothetical posed by the district court that it would have been unreasonable for an officer to cut a column off a house because it had the owners' initials on it is also inapposite. It would have clearly resulted in substantial harm to property that was not described in the warrant – the house. Here, the concrete sidewalk had the names of the members of the Hells Angels' club inscribed in it and the plaintiffs do not claim its removal caused any consequential damage. All the evidence seized or damaged fell within the scope of the warrant.

as not satisfying the particularity requirement of the Fourth Amendment, but that challenge is not raised here. Although I might well have agreed that this warrant was overly-broad on its face, that issue is not before us.

While it is true the police do not have discretion to go outside the bounds of the warrant, neither do they violate a plaintiffs' constitutional rights when they seize evidence pursuant to a valid search warrant. That is what warrants are for – to limit the evidence that can be seized and the areas to be searched. It is not the police officer's role to determine how to limit the scope of the warrant. It is the function of the independent magistrate to assure that there is probable cause to issue the warrant and that the warrant is drafted narrowly and the things to be seized are described with particularity.

Finally, there are good reasons for not requiring officers to exercise their own discretion as to how much evidence is enough. Linderman was not the deputy district attorney who would try the case and was not in a position to judge whether the trial court would admit into evidence photographs of the objects instead of the objects themselves or whether, in this era of digitally altered images, defense counsel would ridicule a photograph as tainted by police technicians, should the original object not be produced. At the time of the search, Linderman did not know what evidence would be found, how that evidence might or might not prove Tausan was a member of the Hells Angels, nor exactly what needle the district attorney might find in that haystack. Often it is only by searching through a large volume of evidence that an attorney is able to find the few crucial pieces of evidence that establish the case. It was not Linderman's role during the simultaneous

search of several residences to pre-judge what would or would not turn out to be important.[3]

Because the police were looking for evidence of a murder, and a possible gang enhancement charge, and, most importantly, because the police did not seize any evidence that was outside the scope of the warrant, I fail to see how a torn-up sidewalk, spoiled food in the refrigerator, and the loss of a mailbox rise to the level of a constitutional violation. Accordingly, I dissent from the denial of qualified immunity to Linderman.

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[3] Neither is it up to Linderman to judge the dramatic effect on a jury of the demonstrative evidence, such as the concrete sidewalk where the Hells Angels' members had signed their name.

NOT FOR CITATION

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

SAN JOSE DIVISION

THE SAN JOSE CHARTER OF THE HELLS ANGELS MOTORCYCLE CLUB, et al., Plaintiffs v. CITY OF SAN JOSE, et al., Defendants.	Case Number C-99-20022-JF (PVT) ORDER GRANTING IN PART AND DENYING IN PART DEFENDANTS' MOTIONS FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT ON THE GROUND OF QUALIFIED IMMUNITY [Doc. Nos. 216, 218, 224]

(Filed May 31, 2002)

Before the Court are Defendants' motions for summary judgment on the ground of qualified immunity.[1] The Court has considered the briefing submitted by the parties as well as the oral arguments presented at the hearings on April 22, 2002 (with respect to the motions of the City of San Jose Defendants) and May 28, 2002 (with respect to the motions of the County of Santa Clara Defendants). Defendants' motions will be granted in part and denied in part for the reasons set forth below.

[1] Defendant Greer also moves for summary judgment on the ground that the claims against him are time-barred.

I. BACKGROUND

This action arises out of the conduct of law enforcement personnel investigating the death of a man who was beaten to death at the Pink Poodle nightclub in San Jose on August 24, 1997. Lieutenant Robert Linderman ("Linderman") of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office led the investigation. He came to believe that Steve Tausan, one of the nightclub's bouncers and a member of the San Jose Charter of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club ("the SJC"), had committed the crime. He also suspected other SJC members and associates of concealing evidence of the murder.

On October 6, 1997, Linderman applied for a warrant to search the SJC clubhouse and the residences of various individuals alleged to be affiliated with the SJC. In support of the application, Linderman submitted a twenty-seven page affidavit based upon information provided by two confidential informants as well as other law enforcement officials, including San Jose Police Officer Jorge Gil-Blanco ("Gil-Blanco"), an expert on the Hells Angels organization. Linderman also presented the live testimony of the two confidential informants. Superior Court Judge John Ball issued the warrant as requested on October 6, 1997.

On January 20, 1998, Linderman applied for a second warrant to search the SJC clubhouse and the residences of various individuals alleged to be affiliated with the SJC for: (1) the Pink Poodle security video tape; (2) "any evidence of membership in, affiliation with, activity of, or identify of, any gang, including but not limited to, any reference to 'Hells Angels,'" and (3) notes of SJC meetings of August 29, 1997 and July through November 1996.

Linderman submitted a 24-page affidavit which incorporated the statements made in his prior October 6, 1997 affidavit. Judge Ball issued the second warrant on January 20, 1998.

It is the conduct of law enforcement personnel in executing the second warrant that gives rise to Plaintiffs' claims. The warrant was executed on the morning of January 21, 1998 by the Sheriff's Office working in cooperation with several local city police agencies, including the San Jose Police Department. "Entry teams" secured each location, after which the searches and seizures were carried out. Plaintiffs assert that the officers executing the warrants acted unreasonably and in excess of their authority. Plaintiffs' operative third amended complaint alleges the following causes of action: (1) a § 1983[2] claim for violation of civil rights; (2) a claim for conspiracy to violate civil rights; and (3) a *Bivens*[3] claim for violation of civil rights.

This Court previously has made a number of rulings regarding the second warrant, including the following: (1) the warrant was supported by probable cause to search for gang indicia; (2) the warrant was not supported by probable cause to search for the Pink Poodle video surveillance tape and notes of SJC meetings; (3) Plaintiffs failed to establish that Linderman or Gil-Blanco deliberately or recklessly omitted material facts from their affidavits submitted in support of the warrant applications; and (4) Judge Ball would have issued the warrant even if he had

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[2] 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

[3] *Bivens v. Six Unknown Fed. Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971).

been informed of all the facts which Plaintiffs claim were misstated or omitted by Linderman and Gil-Blanco.

II. LEGAL STANDARD

A motion for summary judgment should be granted if there is no genuine issue of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c); *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 247-48 (1986). The moving party bears the initial burden of informing the Court of the basis for the motion and identifying the portions of the pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, admissions, or affidavits which demonstrate the absence of a triable issue of material fact. *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986).

If the moving party meets this initial burden, the burden shifts to the non-moving party to present specific facts showing that there is a genuine issue for trial. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(e); *Celotex,* 477 U.S. at 324. A genuine issue for trial exists if the non-moving party presents evidence from which a reasonable jury, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to that party, could resolve the material issue in his or her favor. *Anderson,* 477 U.S. 242, 248-49; *Barlow v. Ground,* 943 F.2d 1132, 1134-36 (9th Cir. 1991).

III. DISCUSSION

The Supreme Court recently clarified the appropriate analytical framework to be applied to assertions of qualified immunity in *Saucier v. Katz,* 533 U.S. 194 (2001). After oral argument with respect to the motions of the City of San Jose Defendants, the Ninth Circuit provided

further clarification in *Sorrels v. McKee*, ___ F.3d ___, 2002 WL 1000750 (9th Cir. May 17, 2002). These decisions set forth a two-pronged inquiry. First, do the facts alleged, viewed in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, demonstrate that the defendant's conduct violated a constitutional right? *Saucier*, 533 U.S. at 201; *Sorrels*, 2002 WL 1000750, at *3. Second, if so, was that right clearly established? *Id.* "The relevant, dispositive inquiry in determining whether a right is clearly established is whether it would be clear to a reasonable officer that his conduct was unlawful in the situation he confronted." *Saucier*, 533 U.S. at 202. This inquiry is wholly objective; the defendant's subjective belief as to the lawfulness of his or her conduct is irrelevant. *Sorrels*, 2002 WL 1000750, at *4.

The plaintiff bears the burden of showing that the right at issue was clearly established under the second prong of the qualified immunity analysis. *Id.* at *3. Obviously, the existence of binding precedent directly on point would suffice to meet this burden. *Id.* at *4. Absent binding precedent, the plaintiff may point to decisions of other circuit courts, district courts and state courts directly on point. *Id.* However, it is not necessary that the defendant's precise conduct have been held unconstitutional previously, so long as the unlawfulness of the conduct was apparent in light of preexisting law. *Id.* In other words, "[c]losely analogous preexisting case law is not required to show that a right was clearly established." *Id.* (internal citation and quotation marks omitted). The plaintiff need show only that the defendant's conduct "was such a far cry from what any reasonable . . . official could have believed was legal" that the defendant knew or reasonably should have known he was breaking the law. *Id.* at *5. In more pragmatic terms, the question is whether the conduct at

issue "passes the laugh test." *Id.* If so, the defendant is entitled to qualified immunity. *Id.*

A. City Of San Jose Defendants:

San Jose officers led the entry teams at four residences: the Pettigrew residence, the Souza residence, the Vieira residence and the Cook/Bozzie residence. They seek summary judgment with respect to alleged unconstitutional conduct at all four residences.

1. Pettigrew Residence

Jeffrey Pettigrew ("Pettigrew") was not at home when officers arrived at his home to execute the search warrant because he already was in police custody. It is undisputed, however, that officers at the scene did not know that Pettigrew had been taken into custody and believed that there might be persons in the home. The Pettigrew residence had been rated "high risk." The officer in charge of the entry knew that Pettigrew had prior arrests for weapons and drug charges and that loaded weapons and a bulletproof vest had been found at the home a during a prior search. Finally, the warrant being executed stated that an AK-47 assault weapon likely was on the premises. Under these circumstances, the entry team decided to use "flashbangs," distraction devices which produce approximately five pounds of pressure per square inch and emit a flash of light, a loud noise and smoke to distract potential assailants. After knocking at the door and identifying themselves, the entry team broke down the door with a ram and deployed a flashbang into the living room. The entry team moved through the house to the bedroom, where they deployed a second flashbang. As it turned out,

the house was empty. The flashbangs caused damage to Pettigrew's carpet and other property.

Based upon the record in the instant case, the Court concludes that the officers' conduct in entering Pettigrew's home did not violate Pettigrew's constitutional rights. The officers were acting pursuant to a valid search warrant. They knew that the search was related to a murder investigation; that it had been rated high risk; that the warrant provided for search of an AK-47 assault weapon; and that weapons previously had been found on the premises. Under these circumstances, the officers understandably proceeded with extreme caution.[4] Even if the Court were to conclude for purposes of analysis that Pettigrew had a constitutional right to be free from the use of flashbang devices in his home, such right was not clearly established. Plaintiffs have cited no authority setting forth the parameters for use of flashbang devices. The case cited by Defendants, *United States v. Meyers,* 106 F.3d 936 (10th Cir. 1997), states that when a Fourth Amendment claim challenges officers' use of flashbang devices, it must be determined whether the officers' conduct was reasonable under all the circumstances. *Id.* at 940. The Court concludes as a matter of law that the officers reasonably could have believed their conduct to be lawful under the circumstances. Accordingly, the officers are entitled to qualified immunity with respect to the Pettigrew search.

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[4] Such caution would have been equally warranted even had the officers known that Pettigrew was in custody, as somebody else could have been in the home.

Plaintiffs argue that the entry officers were negligent in failing to discover Pettigrew's incarceration or recklessly disregarded his incarceration, relying upon *Liston v. County of Riverside*, 120 F.3d 965 (9th Cir. 1997). In that case, law enforcement officers acting pursuant to a search warrant battered down the door of a small private residence, detained the occupants and ransacked the premises looking for drug paraphernalia. The suspected drug manufacturer who was the target of the search had sold the house, however, and couple with young children had moved in three days prior to the search. The Court reversed the district court's order granting qualified immunity to the officer who had obtained the warrant, holding that there were triable issues of material fact as to whether he had recklessly or deliberately omitted from his affidavit the information that there had been a "For Sale" sign, and later a "Sold" sign posted in front of the house. *Id.* at 974-75.

Liston is distinguishable from the present case on a number of grounds. First, the portion of the analysis relied upon by Plaintiffs, i.e., the portion addressing the significance of the "For Sale" and "Sold" signs, speaks to the obligations of an officer seeking a search warrant. The instant case addresses the obligations of officers entering a residence pursuant to a search warrant already obtained. The two types of obligations are quite different. Moreover, while in the *Liston* case there was evidence that the defendant officer had seen the "For Sale" and "Sold" signs, there is no evidence in the record that any of the officers involved in the search of the Pettigrew home knew that Pettigrew was in custody and thus not at home. Accordingly, the citation to *Liston* does not further Plaintiffs' argument.

2. Souza Residence

The entry team assigned to the home of James Souza ("Souza") knew in advance that he previously had been arrested on weapons and narcotics charges and that there were two dogs on the premises, one of which was reported to be a large rottweiler that bit without provocation. The plan was for a primary team go through the home's front door while a secondary team simultaneously entered the back yard by using bolt cutters to open a padlocked gate. The secondary team's primary responsibility was to deal with the dogs. There is no evidence, however, that the officers formed any kind of realistic plan for dealing with the dogs. The officers planned to isolate or incapacitate the dogs, but did not bring pepper spray, muzzles, tranquilizers or any items to aid them in doing so other than their weapons.

When the officers attempted to cut through the padlocked gate, a rottweiler approached on the other side, agitated and barking. A neighbor appeared and offered to take care of the dog, but the officers refused this offer and continued their attempts – ultimately unsuccessful – to cut through the padlock. The secondary team notified the primary team that they could not get through the gate and that there was a rottweiler on the loose. The primary team entered the back yard from the house, looking for the rottweiler. The officers kept their weapons drawn because their lines of sight were impaired by machinery and junk throughout the yard. The rottweiler appeared and came at the officers, at which time one of the officers shot and killed it with two bursts from MP5 automatic rifle. The second dog, which was small and nonthreatening, was unharmed.

The Court concludes that, viewing the facts in the light most favorable to Souza, Souza's Fourth Amendment rights were violated by the killing of his dog. The killing of a dog constitutes a seizure of property under the Fourth Amendment. *Fuller v. Vines,* 36 F.3d 65, 68 (9th Cir. 1994), *overruled on other grounds, Robinson v. Solana County,* 278 F.3d 1007, 1013 (9th Cir. 2002). An unreasonable killing of a dog therefore constitutes a violation of the Fourth Amendment. *Id.; see also Brown v. Muhlenberg Township,* 269 F.3d 205, 211-12 (3d Cir. 2001) (holding that it was unlawful for an officer to kill a pet that posed no imminent danger when owners were presented and wanted to assume custody). In the present case, there is evidence that the San Jose police officers who planned entry into Souza's home knew in advance that there were dogs on the premises, one of which was reported to be a large rottweiler with a propensity for biting. The officers nonetheless created an entry plan designed to bring them into proximity of the dogs without providing themselves with any non-lethal means for controlling the dogs. The officers, in effect, left themselves without any option but to kill the dogs in the event they – quite predictably – attempted to guard the home from invasion.

The Court further concludes that no reasonable officer could have believed that this "plan" for dealing with Souza's dogs was lawful. Defendants point to the absence of case law addressing this precise factual scenario, that is, the shooting of a dog by police officers executing a search warrant. *Sorrels* makes clear, however, that such case law is not necessary so long as the unlawfulness of the conduct was apparent under preexisting law. *Sorrels,* 2002 WL at *4. The Court concludes that, in light of preexisting law, a reasonable officer would have known

that it was unlawful to enter a home known to be guarded by a potentially vicious dog without making any provision for subduing the dog other than by shooting it. The Court therefore will deny the motion for summary judgment with respect to the claims arising out of the killing of Souza's dog.

3. Vieira Residence

The entry team assigned to the residence of Robert and Lori Vieira ("the Vieiras") knew in advance that the property included a residence and a junkyard completely encircled by a tall, padlocked cyclone fence and that there might be dogs roaming the area between the fence and the home. The plan was to cut the lock on the fence gate, approach the house, provide knock-notice and then enter and secure the house. Officer Nieves was assigned the duty of protecting the entry team from any dogs. It appears from the evidence in the record that the extent of his plan for dealing with any dogs was (1) hoping that no dogs would appear, (2) poking his shotgun through the fence at any dogs which did appear in an effort to scare them away and (3) as a last resort, to "engage" the dogs.

Predictably, this plan did not work out very well, at least for the dogs. The team began cutting through the lock on the fence gate. Three large dogs resembling bull mastiffs appeared and ran toward the gate, barking and growling. One dog jumped and bit at the hands of the officers trying to cut the lock. Officer Nieves struck at the attacking dog back with the barrel of his shotgun, which only made it more aggressive and agitated. He shot the dog. It went down, but a second dog stood fast and growled. Officer Nieves shot that dog twice. It retreated

with the third dog. By this time, the team was through the gate. Officer Nieves then shot the first dog, which was injured and trying to rise, a second time. Both the first and second dogs died. The third dog, and a fourth dog which had been chained in the back yard, were unharmed.

Applying the analysis set forth above with respect to the killing of the Souza's dog, the Court concludes that, viewing the facts in the light most favorable to the Vieiras, the Vieiras' Fourth Amendment rights were violated by the killing of their dogs. The Court further concludes that no reasonable officers in Defendants' position could have believed their conduct to be lawful. Accordingly, the Court will deny the motion for qualified immunity with respect to the claims arising out of the killing of the Vieiras' dogs.

4. Cook/Bozzie Residence

When the entry team assigned to the residence of Hells Angels member Ronald Cook and his companion Vickie Bozzie ("Bozzie"), only Bozzie was at home. Bozzie states that she did not hear the entry team's knock but looked out the window and saw a man in a mask. She further states that she believed the man to be a burglar and ran toward the rear of the house to call the police. An officer looking into the home through the window believed Bozzie was trying to evade the police and ordered that the front door be broken down. Officers found Bozzie in the kitchen and made her lie on the floor, where they placed her in handcuffs. She was clothed only in a thigh-length, sheer, "baby-doll" negligee. She states that she asked permission to change clothes, but was refused. According to her deposition testimony, "everything was hanging out" and "everybody was staring." She was

forced to sit, handcuffed in the negligee, for approximately twenty or twenty-five minutes before a San Jose police officer allowed her to put on some pants. She was not given anything to conceal her torso, which was clad only in skimpy, sheer fabric. At about this time the San Jose officers turned custody of Bozzie and the premises over to Santa Clara County Sheriff's deputies, who kept her in handcuffs for an additional three hours or more.

"[W]hile detentions of occupants during the period of a search will under most circumstances prove to have been reasonable, a detention may be unreasonable in a particular instance either because the detention itself is improper or because it is carried out in an unreasonable manner." *Franklin v. Foxworth,* 31 F.3d 873, 876 (9th Cir. 1994). Consequently, "[a] detention conducted in connection with a search may be unreasonable if it is unnecessarily painful, degrading, or prolonged, or if it involves an undue invasion of privacy." *Id.* Other relevant factors include the severity of the crime, whether the person being detained poses an immediate threat and whether he or she actively resists or attempts to flee. *Id.* All of these factors, as well as any other circumstances relevant to the particular case, must be considered in their totality in determining whether a detention is unreasonable. *Id.*

Applying this standard, the *Foxworth* court concluded that the police "executed the warrant in an unreasonable manner, first by removing a gravely ill and semi-naked man from his sickbed without providing any clothing or covering, and then by forcing him to remain sitting handcuffed in his living room for two hours rather than returning him to his bed within a reasonable time after the search of his room was completed." *Id.* at 876-77. The court noted that none of the officers had reason to believe

the detainee had committed a crime, that he was armed, that he presented a flight risk or that he could interfere with their search. *Id.* at 877.

For similar reasons, this Court concludes that the manner in which the San Jose officers detained Bozzie was unreasonable. She had no weapons, was not suspected of any crime, had no record and was not a member of the Hells Angels. Under these circumstances, there was no reason to inflict upon her the humiliating experience of sitting in plain view of a number of officers while handcuffed and barely clothed. The San Jose Defendants assert that they had custody of Bozzie for only the initial twenty minutes or so of her detention, and argue that a detention of such a short duration does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. The reasonableness of the detention must be assessed under the totality of the circumstances. Even twenty minutes is a significant period of time to a person who is practically naked and feels as if she is on display to anyone who cares to look. No reasonable officer could have believed that detaining Bozzie in this manner was lawful given the circumstances of this case. The Court therefore will deny the motion for summary judgment with respect to the claims arising out of Bozzie's detention.

B. County Of Santa Clara Defendants:

1. Linderman

Linderman did not personally participate in the execution of the warrants. However, he coordinated the efforts of the various law enforcement agencies, made the initial risk-assessment with respect to each location and was available to answer questions called in by officers on

the site. Plaintiffs assert that Linderman violated their constitutional rights in two ways: instructing the search teams to exceed the scope of the warrants by unnecessarily destroying and seizing property; and making unwarranted assessments of the searches as "high risk" or "moderate to high risk."

Instructions To Search Teams

There were literally truckloads of Hells Angels indicia at the search locations, including belts, jewelry, plaques, t-shirts, hats, watches, vests, calendars, clocks, sculptures, photographs, correspondence and motorcycles. Various members of the search teams called in to Linderman, asking for guidance as to what and how much to seize. Linderman told them to seize everything. Officers on site did so, seizing everything from belt buckles to the clubhouse mailbox to motorcycles worth more than $20,000 that had Hells Angels insignia somewhere on them. In addition, they seized the door to the clubhouse refrigerator because it had a Hells Angels decal on it and removed portions of the sidewalk in front of the clubhouse with a jack-hammer because members had written their names in the cement. So much gang indicia evidence was seized that it would not fit into a normal evidence room – special offsite storage had to be rented.

Viewing the facts in the light most favorable to Plaintiffs, the Court concludes that Linderman directed that the warrants be executed in a manner which violated Plaintiffs' constitutional rights. It is well-established that "unnecessarily destructive behavior, beyond that necessary to execute a warrant effectively, violates the Fourth Amendment." *Liston,* 120 F.3d at 979. Given the volume of

easily transportable gang indicia available at all the search locations, it clearly was unreasonable for Linderman to instruct officers, for example, to seize expensive and prized motorcycles or destroy portions of the sidewalk. No reasonable officer in his position could have believed that execution of the warrants in this manner was necessary or lawful. Accordingly, the Court will deny the motion for summary judgment as to claims arising out of Linderman's exercise of discretion regarding items to be seized under the warrants.

Risk Assessments

Linderman was responsible for assessing the "risk-factor" in executing the warrant at each location. The risk-factor dictated the level of force officers used in executing the warrant. Linderman gave a "high" or "moderate to high" assessment with respect to each location. Plaintiffs assert that assessments this high were unwarranted. As an example, Plaintiffs assert that the Linderman rated the search of the Cook/Bozzie residence as moderate to high even though Cook had not been arrested since 1977 and had never been convicted of a felony and Bozzie had no criminal record whatsoever. Plaintiffs assert that the officers on site would have used less drastic force had they not been given inflated risk assessments.

There do not appear to be any cases directly on point. Plaintiffs cite *Liston* and other cases for the proposition that police are not permitted use force beyond that necessary to execute a warrant effectively. However, it is unclear from these cases whether the application of an unduly high risk assessment could rise to the level of a constitutional violation. Even if it could, the Court

concludes as a matter of law that an officer in Linderman's position reasonably could have believed that the high risk assessments were warranted. Linderman knew that the warrants sought evidence in an investigation of a violent murder and that occupants of some of the premises had criminal records. Under these circumstances Linderman's caution in assessing the risks involved in each search was understandable and certainly passes the "laugh test." The Court therefore will grant the motion for summary judgment as to claims arising out of Linderman's risk assessments.

2. Greer

James Greer was in charge of the search team at the home of James and Marnie Arnett. Only Marnie Arnett ("Arnett") was home at the time. Greer and his team searched the premises, seizing several items for which Arnett was given a receipt, and left. Among the items seized was an album containing a hundred or more photographs. Some of these photographs depicted Hells Angels activities. Others were personal and unrelated to Hells Angels activities, including several nude photographs of Arnett. Arnett called Greer several times after the search, asking for the return of her nude photographs. Greer photocopied the nude photographs, placing the photocopies in the album where the originals had been, and returned the originals to her. Arnett asserts that seizure of her nude photographs was outside the scope of the warrant and violated her constitutional rights.

As an initial matter, Greer asserts that Arnett's claim is time-barred. The statute of limitations for § 1983 claims is one year. The conduct at issue, seizing the photo album,

occurred on the date of the search, January 21, 1998. Greer identified himself to Arnett at the time of the search and handed her a receipt bearing his name and badge number. Arnett went to the Sheriff's Office and met with Greer approximately a month after the search, on February 27, 1998, in an effort to get the nude photos back. Greer was not substituted in place of a Doe defendant until the first amended complaint was filed more than one year later, on April 9, 1999. Under these circumstances, the Court concludes that Arnett's claim against Greer is time-barred.[5]

Even if the Court were to reach the merits of Arnett's claim, the Court would conclude that Greer is entitled to summary judgment based on qualified immunity. It is unclear whether the seizure of an album containing photographs covered by a warrant becomes unconstitutional when the album also contains highly personal photographs not covered by the warrant. Plaintiffs cite *United States v. Tamura*, 694 F.2d 591 (9th Cir. 1982) for the proposition that such a seizure does rise to the level of a constitutional violation. In that case, government officials seized a file containing records covered by a warrant and records not covered by the warrant. The court rejected an argument that it would be unduly burdensome to require officers executing a warrant to sort through records at the scene, holding that "the wholesale seizure

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[5] The Court notes that Judge Williams previously denied a motion to dismiss based upon the statute of limitations. Judge Williams' ruling with respect to the prior motion to dismiss, which necessarily was limited to the face of the pleadings, does not preclude this Court from addressing the statute of limitations argument in the context of a motion for summary judgment supported by evidence establishing that the claim is time-barred.

for later detailed examination of records not described in a warrant" was not appropriate. *Id.* at 595. The instant case does not involve the type of wholesale seizure that concerned the court in *Tamura,* however. While in that case the officials seized eleven cardboard boxes of documents, thirty-four file drawers of vouchers and seventeen drawers of cancelled checks, the instant dispute involves seizure of a single photo album. Accordingly, the facts of the present case are more analogous to cases involving seizure of a single item containing some material covered by a warrant and some not covered. *See, e.g., Davis v. Gracey,* 111 F.3d 1472 (10th Cir. 1997) (concluding no Fourth Amendment violation when defendants seized computer bulletin board containing covered and non-covered communications). Even if the Court were to conclude that seizure of the album violated Arnett's rights, a reasonable officer of Greer's position could have believed his conduct to be lawful based upon the existing legal authority. The Court therefore will grant Greer's motion for summary judgment on the ground of qualified immunity.

IV. ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

(1) the motions for summary judgment are GRANTED with respect to the claims arising out of the search of the Pettigrew residence, Linderman's risk assessments and Greer's seizure of the Arnetts' photograph album; and

(2) the motions for summary judgment are DENIED with respect to the claims arising out of the killing of the dogs at the Souza and Vieira

residences, Bozzie's detention and Linderman's instructions regarding execution of the warrants.

DATED: 5-31-02

/s/ Jeremy Fogel
JEREMY FOGEL
United States District Judge

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